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THE COMMON ANCESTOR

A Novel

BY

JOHN HILL

AUTHOR OF 'TREASON-FELONY,' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

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THE COMMON ANCESTOR

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN the Smalleys gave what they called a party, it was not to be done without rather more fuss and worry and general dislocation of things than is usual when an Expedition to the Soudan is suddenly called for, ordered, embarked, and countermanded. The house ‘resounded,’ to use reporters’ jargon, ‘with the din of preparation,’ and the family, to use Jane’s literary style, was ‘placed in a state of excitement bordering on frenzy—specially in the case of pa.’

Mr. Smalley pervaded the premises, giving every kind of loud-voiced advice, order, and counter-order, and asking

questions, till the servants began to 'turn,' and Mrs. Smalley went upstairs to lie down. At any crisis demanding either trouble or responsibility, Mrs. Smalley had a headache and went upstairs to lie down.

Fortunately Hélène, though a little wooden and conventional in conversation, had a good deal of practical industry and ability in domestic undertakings of any kind, and was quiet, determined and persistent. She knew pretty well what to do, listened politely to her father's futile babblings, politely replied 'Yes, papa,' to whatever he said, and took no further notice, and could exercise both authority and conciliation with the servants. Florrie and Jane helped her willingly enough, but Lilian the learned was too busy, and confined her part in the matter to weak sarcasms. A mind which was engaged in mastering the elements of the Higher Buddhism could not waste its golden hours on such trivialities as decorating dinner-tables. Wherefore the main credit of that

dinner-table is due to Hélène and her little sisters, and as such deserves chronicling.

Johnny, I regret to say, spent most of his time in the society of the Scanlans, under the pretext of 'showing them the garden' during the heat of the crisis, late in the afternoon, until Nora found out, through accidentally passing the open dining-room window, that the above-named young ladies were hard at work there, whereon she at once proffered her assistance, which was readily accepted, and she was found to be of great use, and to have much taste. After that Johnny sauntered in, and said :

'Anything I can do for you in the way of help, girls?'

To which Hélène replied :

'No. The best thing you can do will be to keep out of the way.'

After which he 'stood about' in an aimless way, and sauntered out again to Dick.

When the table was finished, it did the girls credit, and presented the following

appearance : Down the middle of the table lay a long strip of gathered gray satin, with salmon and crimson carnations and ferns alternating on either side. On the satin stood two boat-shaped épergnes laden with different kinds of fruits. At intervals were tall silver candlesticks with wax candles bearing crimson shades.

‘That,’ said Hélène, ‘will suit their complexions, I think.’

‘It will that,’ said Nora.

And then the girls went upstairs to well-earned repose, to be followed by hot water and dressing. And when they were dressed, and in the drawing-room ready to receive their guests, this is what their toilets were : Hélène Smalley wore a yellow satin skirt covered with brown Russian net, a yellow satin bodice with elbow sleeves made a little high and full on the shoulders, and a brown beaded ‘Medici’ collar and brown *Suède* gloves, and looked very ‘nice’ in it, to use her favourite adjective. Lilian the learned wore a terra-cotta Liberty silk, cut shape-

less with a sash, high-necked, and yellow gloves, long and wrinkled, because she had read in the papers that Madame Sarah Bernhardt wore them, whom she imagined herself to resemble, in genius, if not in appearance. She also wore her hair short and curly, as befitted one studying the Higher Buddhism.

Mrs. Smalley wore a rich black silk, described by Jane as 'brigaded,' together with some diamonds which were described as 'family,' and some neck-pins of Mr. Smalley in a lace cap, and a fichu of Honiton lace, and was the most absolutely correct of British matrons.

Nora Scanlan wore a white silk dress, covered with black lace, having diamond brooches on her shoulders. She also wore a diamond shamrock which glittered in her black hair, Dick having insisted on all these diamonds in the generosity of his heart, though she herself was rather reluctant to wear them. She wore black gloves.

And then the guests began to arrive,

among the first being Mr. and Mrs. Disney, the Vicar and his wife, and their daughter.

Mr. Disney was a tall, melancholy-looking man with a long iron-gray beard and a bald head. Mrs. Disney was large and commanding, with double eyeglasses, hair in *bandeaux*, an aggressive dark-red silk dress, and garnet ornaments. Miss Disney wore a pale-green nun's veiling dress with tan gloves and shoes, and looked rather well in them, being of the tall, fair, colourless style of beauty. Then came Cunningham, calm and 'brown as the ribbed sea-sand' as usual, and looking taller and thinner than ever in evening dress. Johnny came hurrying down to get a suitable button-hole flower from the conservatory, and looked very smart in the newest and shortest shape of evening coat with satin *revers*. Mr. Smalley fidgeted about and looked at the clock and his own large gold watch repeatedly, and wore a roomy evening suit of some antiquity, and large shiny laced

patent-leather shoes. Dick was of course punctual and neat, in a new 'kit.' Then, just as the clock had struck the hour, the door was thrown open, and the blank puffy face of Burbidge, the hired man, without whom no social function at Redcliff was complete, who knew more in his quiet, dull way about the inner life of the community than most people, appeared in the doorway, and his expressionless voice announced, 'Mr. Scheiner!' And Mr. Scheiner came in, a drooping black bow at his throat, a crimson carnation in his button-hole, beaming and bowing *staccato*. He walked up to Mrs. Smalley, put his feet together, took her hand, stooped at right angles, and kissed the cream kid fingers. Mrs. Smalley thought how graceful these foreign fashions were. Mr. Smalley stared with eyes as wide as nature allowed, held out a large hand, and said :

'How do again, Scheiner. Welcome to Fernbank!' and tried to smite his beaming little guest on the back, an assault which

was dexterously evaded. Scheiner was then introduced to the Scanlans, and to the Disneys, and to Cunningham. Then Mr. and Mrs. Paynter came.

Mr. Disney began a long and entangled discourse about the Engadine, where he had been last year, and had got as far as the doctor's opinions about that 'resort,' when Burbidge appeared again to announce 'Dinner's on the table.'

Then came the procession. Mr. Smalley and Mrs. Disney led the way, it being difficult, as Cunningham thought, to decide which displayed the greater pomp or self-satisfaction, or leant back more as they walked. Then the rest followed in couples, Mrs. Smalley bringing up the rear gracefully with Scheiner.

Mr. Smalley stood up and nodded significantly, and made faces at Mr. Disney, whereat that pundit uplifted his face and said 'grace' in the ululatory manner peculiar to certain Anglican clergy, to the surprise and entertainment of Dick and Nora, who,

when they heard it at all, had been used to a different method. Then the soup and conversation began. Cunningham reflected, 'Different to my yesterday's dinner, rather,' and sipped a little of the orthodox sherry. Then his partner, Miss Disney, engaged him in conversation.

'You haven't been down to Redcliff for a long time, Mr. Cunningham.'

'No.'

'Shall you be going to the Regatta Ball?'

'I really don't know. I haven't thought about it—in fact, I had forgotten that there was such a thing.'

'They say it will be good this year.'

'Oh, I hope so. I presume you are going?'

'Oh yes! I'm going with Hélène and Lilian. Mrs. Smalley's good enough to take me. It's so nice of her, because mother doesn't go to dances. She likes dinners, but she doesn't care about dances. Sitting up late doesn't agree with her.'

‘I must say I rather sympathize with Mrs. Disney. I prefer dinner to dancing. But that is because I am lazy, I suppose, and getting old.

‘Oh, Mr. Cunningham, how can you! How ridiculous to talk about being old! Why, what am I, if it comes to that?’

‘What are you? Well, it’s not considered good taste to pay direct compliments, or I would tell you what you are at great length, with much pleasure.’

Miss Disney smiled and wriggled, and was pleased. Cunningham never moved a muscle of his dry, bony face, and took advantage of Miss Disney’s temporary silence to finish his fish. It will be understood that nearly everybody else was talking too—Mr. Smalley loudly to Mrs. Disney about the parochial row between himself and Mr. Satterthwaite, in which Mrs. Disney took the side of the Smalley faction because Mr. Satterthwaite was a Radical and a Dissenter; Lilian and Mr. Disney were having a dismal argument about

Buddhism, a subject which neither of them understood, interrupted by irreverent comments from Johnny, who was, however, principally engaged in conversation in undertones with Nora, of a disjointed, partly jocular, partly sentimental character, to which she listened in a lazy, inattentive way, having her mind occupied with wondering what Cunningham had said that made the girl next him look so pleased.

Scheiner was making himself generally agreeable with fluent impartiality, while Dick Scanlan was steadily 'blarneying' Hélène with great success, the while not neglecting to do extreme justice to his victuals and drink. In the meantime we will follow the art of polite conversation, as further exhibited by Miss Disney and Cunningham. The former said in a confidential tone :

‘What an extremely pretty girl that cousin of the Smalleys is ! Don’t you think so ?’

‘Yes, very.’

‘You know them, don’t you? I mean before they came here.’

‘Well, I did meet them—yes.’

‘Well, do tell me, is it true that she was a barmaid before they came into a fortune?’

‘No, Miss Disney, it is not true.’

‘Well, what really *is* the truth? I can’t get it out of H  l  ne, except that he was in the Guards—I suppose as a common soldier, of course. I know there often are gentlemen in the ranks now. Hughie Barker couldn’t pass into anything, and enlisted in the 11th Hussars.’

‘Scanlan was not a common soldier when he left the army. I’ve no doubt he will be delighted to tell you all about it, and he’s a very agreeable fellow.’

‘They’ve an immense fortune, haven’t they?’

‘I understand they are comfortably off, but I can’t tell you the amount. I must again refer you to Dick Scanlan. Perhaps he knows.’

‘How horridly aggravating you are, Mr. Cunningham! I expected you to know all about them.’

‘I think I do know all about them, as far as their general career goes.’

‘But you haven’t told *me* a single thing. And everybody is longing to know all about them.’

‘Tell everybody they’ve got a lot of money. That generally satisfies everybody.’

‘But won’t you tell *me* in confidence what she was?’

‘Well, Miss Disney, you see, I’m a barrister, and I’m much better at asking questions than answering; but I should think Miss Scanlan would have no hesitation in telling you herself, if you ask her.’

Here, in a momentary lull of conversation, the voice of Nora was heard saying to Johnny:

‘Oh yes! I’m used to having my brogue laughed at. They used to call me Paddy at Whitehall and Westgrove’s.’

Mrs. Smalley and Hélène looked shocked, as if something indecent had been said, and Mr. Smalley said, ‘Eh?’ Dick said, with a pleasant smile :

‘Did they, now? That’s what they called me in the sergeants’ mess.’

‘Really?’ said Hélène, with a feeble smile. ‘How funny!’

‘Now,’ said Cunningham to his inquisitive neighbour—‘now your questions are answered.’

‘So original, too,’ said Johnny, to the general ear.

‘What lovely diamonds she has!’ said Miss Disney to Cunningham’s private ear. ‘I believe you admire the girl, you were so very touchy when I asked you about her!’ she added with a touch of petulance.

‘Of course I do! Don’t you?’ was the calm reply. ‘But I was not touchy.’

Here Scheiner interposed, saying to Nora in particular, and to anyone in general who would answer :

‘But why did anybody apply that particular name to you, of all people?’

‘It’s a term of affection applied by English people to Irish people, same as John Bull is a term of derision applied to English people by everybody,’ explained Dick affably.

‘Ah, exactly! Like Jacques Bonhomme or Hans Wurst. Then, am I to understand that you and this young lady, your sister, are from Ireland?’

‘We are.’

Here Mr. Smalley took up his sapient parable, and said :

‘I’m afraid Dick Scanlan is a bit of a patriot, don’t you know—Parliament on the Green, all that sort of thing!’

‘Ah!’ said Scheiner, nodding to Dick mysteriously, and with dramatic knowingness, ‘let them laugh; but you will get it! I tell you, I am in the inside track of all this thing, and I know!’

‘Do you, now?’ said Dick civilly.

Mrs. Smalley and Hélène, and Lilian

and the Vicar, listened in reverent attention. Scheiner, seeing that he had got his audience, continued :

‘I know another Ireland. It is Italian, and is called Austrian, on the shores of the Adriatic, whose queen, Venice, was once called Austrian, too. The people are Italian—they look Italian, they think Italian, they speak Italian!’

‘Very bad Italian, too!’ murmured Cunningham.

‘One of these days you will see that they will unite with Italy and become part of the *Regno Unito*, though all the Hapsburgs, from Rudolf downwards, rise in their graves! Oh, it’s great! It is their dream, their hope, their religion! It is the undying desire and passion, handed on from generations, learned by the children from their mothers and nurses. I used to be an Irredentist agent in Italy myself at one time!’

Having delivered this statement with much eagerness and gesture, Scheiner emptied a glass of wine. Mrs. Smalley,

extremely puzzled, said, 'How very interesting!' Dick Scanlan, vaguely scenting something 'agin the Goover'mint' (as the Castle Garden immigrant replied when asked his political convictions), said, 'More power!' in a tone of bland encouragement. The little man amused Dick, as an ape might be conceived to amuse a good-tempered mastiff. Nora contemplated Scheiner for a moment with approbation, but made no remark. Mr. Smalley stared, drank some wine, looked round, and said, 'Eh, what?' to a remark which was not addressed to him, and choked. When calm was restored, the quiet and deliberate voice of Cunningham was heard by the table for the first time, saying :

'I suppose you identify yourself with the aspirations of the Trentino and Dalmatia, Mr. Scheiner?'

'Exactly—and Ticino. I am an Irredentist,' replied Scheiner, wondering who this young man was.

'Do you think the kingdom of Italy

would welcome your provinces back at the cost of certain war with Austria and Switzerland, and the loss of the German alliance ?

‘ They would sacrifice anything, anything ! And as it is, the *Triplice* costs Italy a lot more than it is worth !’

‘ Oh, thanks, I only wanted to know, like Rosa Dartle. It struck me as a weak point in the Irredentist programme.’

Nora looked a little aggrieved at Cunningham for trying to throw cold water on a picturesque and romantic patriotic dream. Scheiner, however, replied with completely unshaken conviction :

‘ Well, if you should want to be in any way posted on that subject, I am *the* person for you to apply to, for I know it all, right through, and all the people in it. Been up to my neck in that movement, bathed in it, so to speak. That was after I left Poland, I mean Galicia. You see, we ran a sort of opposition show in Galicia, to distract attention from the movement in the Adriatic

provinces ; not that Austrian Poland has anything special to complain of ; but there's always the old "*Polen ist noch nicht verloren*" feeling there, with Posen and Warsaw so near.'

'And probably the old Krapulinski and Waschlapski ready to keep it up,' suggested Cunningham pleasantly, and he turned to speak to Miss Disney.

'Who is that ?' asked Scheiner of Hélène.

'That is Mr. Cunningham. He is the nephew of Mr. Gilchrist, the rector, at the Old Church, you know.'

Scheiner did not know, of course, and added :

'Travelled a good deal ?'

'I think so. We have known him, of course, for years ; but, then, he is so seldom here. He is very clever.'

'What particular form of cleverness does he make particularly his own, if one may ask ?'

'Well, I don't quite know. I believe he

writes. He lives in town generally. He is a barrister.'

'Then he's sure to be clever, isn't he?' Hélène vaguely gathered that she was expected to laugh.

In the meantime, Cunningham said to Miss Disney :

'Who is the distinguished foreigner? I know his name, but I mean who knows anything about him?'

'Oh, everybody knows him. And he's awfully nice! They say he's going to give a dance at the Riviera.'

'Everybody knows him. Does everybody know who he is and where he comes from?'

'I suppose so.'

'Do *you* know?'

'Well, not exactly.'

'Can you mention anybody else who does?'

'I don't know that I could mention any particular person by name.'

'You can't name a human being in

Redcliff or elsewhere who knows who this gentleman's family are, where his means come from, what he does, or anything about him—not a solitary fact ?

‘Er, no. But the Gooches know him. That’s something.’

‘That indeed is something.’

‘They say Mr. Satterthwaite won’t have anything to do with him ; but, then, he is a dreadful cad, and a Radical, and a Dissenter. Willie Satterthwaite is nice, though.’

‘Quite so. Mr. Satterthwaite is a North-country man and a man of business, too, in days gone by. Well, I must apologize for putting you in the witness-box to this extent.’

Afterwards Miss Disney went about saying that Mr. Cunningham was not at all nice, and said all sorts of dreadful things about Mr. Scheiner, and you never knew whether he was laughing at you or not.

Mr. Disney took occasion to remark with bland self-consciousness that he had no less

than three new parishioners at the table, and added :

‘ I hope, Mr. Scanlan, that your sister may be persuaded to join the Guild we are getting up of Lady-Helpers.’

‘ We’re Catholics,’ replied Dick bluntly.

‘ Ah,’ said Scheiner to him, ‘ so am I ! That is another link of sympathy between us.’ Then addressing himself to Nora, he said : ‘ I always drive over to Mass on Sunday mornings. It is some three or four miles from here. I shall be honoured if you and your brother will accept seats in my carriage ?’

Nora said :

‘ We will be very pleased, if Mrs. Smalley doesn’t object.’

‘ Of course not, dear. It is very kind of Mr. Scheiner, I am sure.’

Mr. Scheiner then turned courteously to Mr. Disney, *qui demeura un peu sot* :

‘ But although not of your faith, sir, I shall be delighted to give any help of mine towards those purposes in which all

faiths are united, the relief of the suffering.'

'You are most kind,' replied the Vicar ; 'in these latter days, I hope our Church has widened its purview considerably.'

Johnny murmured :

'And as for the meaning of that, it's what you please.'

As a matter of fact, there was hardly anybody in a state of real suffering or destitution in that seaside resort, and what Mr. Disney wanted money for was a reredos and a rood-screen. Wherefore Mr. Scheiner's offer was perhaps a little cheap. But no one thought of that.

In due course Mrs. Smalley smirked interrogatively at Mrs. Disney, and the ladies rose and departed. Upon this, Mr. Smalley joined Mr. Paynter, Mr. Disney, and Mr. Scheiner at one end of the room, and Johnny went to the other with Cunningham and Dick Scanlan. Mr. Smalley encouraged everybody jovially to 'push about the jorum' ; but as the jorum con-

sisted of a decanter of port, ditto of sherry, and a bottle of claret, all of Mr. Smalley's own choosing from Mr. Rush, wine merchant, High Street, Redcliff, Johnny warned his two friends in time. Mr. Disney took some of the port because he knew no better, and Mr. Scheiner earned a martyr's crown, and a disordered liver, by taking whatever Mr. Smalley most recommended, and seemed most proud of, vowing internally to make him pay for it heavily one of these days. Then Mr. Scheiner took occasion to privily hand Mr. Smalley an envelope, containing a cheque for fifty pounds, being Mr. Smalley's 'difference' from the recent operations in stocks. Mr. Paynter silently took sherry. And very soon the host, the Vicar and Scheiner were plunged in an animated conversation about that most sacred, elevating and digestive of subjects, money. Scheiner drove the other two into the mazes of finance like a tandem of donkeys, led or pushed them as circumstances demanded,

and did not forget to suspend the time-honoured carrots before their noses, while they followed with the eager curiosity of explorers being guided into a new country. And they talked of the Redcliff Casino *in nubibus*.

Johnny said to Cunningham and Dick Scanlan :

‘ This is getting a trifle oppressive. Let’s go and have a cigarette in the garden, if you don’t want any more to drink. It’s stuffy in here, and the seniors, the Front Bench, are getting rather trying, and they’ll go on for the next hour.’

So Johnny provided them with cigarettes from his case, and they went out into the garden, shutting the dining-room door upon the worshippers of the Golden Image. These latter, after much explanation and fluent illustration, anecdote, and statistics from Scheiner, agreed that it would be a good plan to get up a small but influential meeting to discuss the great project. Paynter, who suffered from a temporary absence of

gossip, which had made him rather silent, and a little jealous of the greater attention paid to Scheiner's conversation than to his own, at first pooh-poohed the project, and said :

‘ Well, but I say, come, you know. We’ve got the club ; what do we want more ?’

To which Scheiner replied :

‘ The club is not amusing—for ladies, and does not pay you dividends, and is of little benefit to the trade of the place, and it is supplied mostly from London.’

And Paynter relapsed into gloom. Having no scandal to repeat always disagreed with Paynter and made him morose. He brightened a little when Scheiner said he expected his wife in a day or two. It would be interesting to find out all about her, and where she came from, and what scrapes she had been in, if any.

‘ I say,’ in an undertone to Mr. Smalley, ‘ half French, you know. Something spicy I expect, eh ?’

Here he nudged his host, who looked at him with hot apoplectic eyes, and nodded, chuckling. Scheiner and the Vicar had both pretended not to hear. Let us leave them so.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was a calm evening late in June, very warm, and the sunset had been over for half an hour or less. Away on the west, above the tall deodars and tapering cypresses which rose on the lawn, was the dark grass down, now no longer pale green patched with gorse in bloom, but of a uniform shadow colour. The dark mass of Fort Romer finished the ridge at the seaward end with its neat straight lines and low chimney-pots. Behind these sharp silhouettes was the sky, dull crimson, varying upwards into lemon, primrose, and platinum colours, and in the sky a few faint stars, and one big bright one—one which we all know. In the south was spread dimly the

gray mystery of the distant sea, while the soft sound of its rolling and breaking fell on the ear from the invisible shore three hundred feet below.

Cunningham, Scanlan, and Johnny Smalley came into the garden together and saw the girls moving slowly about, graceful and mysterious in their light summer evening skirts against the blackness of cypresses and deodars. Bats kept swooping aimlessly to and fro overhead in curved orbits, and here and there in the grass glimmered the faint opal lamp of a glow-worm.

The young men advanced in extended order (as Dick Scanlan said), and found Hélène, Miss Disney, and Jane, who was allowed to appear in the evening, though not at dinner. Hélène was disappointed at not seeing Mr. Scheiner, and decided to be attended by Dick Scanlan in the meantime, and did her best to get rid of Jane. But Jane had no intention of being got rid of; she walked on Dick Scanlan's other side,

and acted as a perfect and sufficient preventive of anything approaching in the mildest way to flirtation. Johnny looked round in a fidgety, disappointed way, and was finally walked off by Miss Disney, who had certain private bones to pick with him, there having been at an earlier date something approaching what writers used to call 'passages' between her and that rather fickle youth. Cunningham had simply vanished. He penetrated beyond a row of tall shrubs, and found himself solitary in a turf walk, on which he walked slowly up and down, feeling the beauty of the evening, and thinking, he was not sure what, but something with a vague intuitive expectancy in it. Ere long the vague expectancy received an actual realization in the shape of Miss Nora Scanlan, who had been in to get a black lace scarf, which she had put over her head and round her neck, and now walked in her peculiar slow and dignified step along this turf path.

'Isn't it a beautiful night?' she said, as

he turned to walk her way, in a silent, matter-of-course manner.

‘It is. Better than the dining-room, eh ? Tell me what you think of the British Dinner-party ?’

‘Well, I wouldn’t like to be unkind, but I think it was stupid.’

‘I’m glad of that. I was afraid you would like it.’

‘Oh ? *You* seemed to enjoy it.’

‘I ?’

‘Yes, you. And I don’t wonder : you were in a very pleasant position. Have you known her long ?’

‘Known whom ? Oh, my neighbour ! Yes ; off and on for some time. I remember her in short frocks, when the New District was first invented, and her revered parent arrived to bleat in the New District pulpit. Johnny Smalley, however, is a greater authority about her than I am. What do you think of the intelligent foreigner ?’

‘Oh, I like him !’

‘I suppose his patriotic aspirations appeal to you? You are, perhaps, looking forward to a day when the Distressful Country will be free and independent?’

‘Of course I am. Only since I’ve been in London I have found that Irish people are always laughed at and considered fools by English people, which is, I suppose, an extra reason for us to love them, and do all the hard fighting and the dirty work for them, and be thankful for their small mercies.’

‘But I think, if you do us justice, you will admit that the Irish people we sometimes permit ourselves to laugh at are principally politicians, whose grotesque behaviour has drawn it on themselves. There is such a thing as English prejudice and narrow-mindedness, no doubt. I, as a Scotsman, sometimes feel that. But really, you know, it is difficult to contemplate a Home Rule Parliament seriously.’

‘Oh, yes, I know! You are just like the rest. The Irish are ridiculous, and talk

with a brogue which is badly imitated in your theatres ; and the poor people can't pay rent out of rocks, or grow beans in a bog, so they are to go to America, or sweep English streets, or anywhere else out of the way ; and our members of Parliament are not always gentlemen, and fit to adorn Royal garden-parties. There, don't let's talk about Ireland ! I always lose my temper over that.'

'But I assure you I never said all that.'

'Not to me, perhaps, but you think it.'

'Dear me !' reflected Cunningham ; 'I have stirred up a wasps' nest.'

This irate beauty went on :

'I know how you think and talk about it. I hear you and other people saying things sometimes—sarcastic things about Ireland—and it makes my blood boil.'

'I don't remember saying anything unkind. I may have indulged in harmless jokes.'

'Yes ; but you meant it. Where would your British Empire you are so proud of be

without Irishmen? Who saved it from eternal ruin and sorrow and dissolution, when all the world were bitter enemies and false friends to it? Why, the Irishmen who fought for it, and the Irishman who led them. Who got and saved Scinde for you, later on? Charles Napier, an Irishman, and the Tipperary men he led. Who is your "only" general now? An Irishman. Who is your "only" other one, in India? An Irishman. Who is your popular nautical hero? An Irishman. Wherever England has made conquests, and gained trade and land, England's road to riches is red with the blood of Irishmen. There, I can't speak of it! I told you it makes me lose my temper.'

'Ireland has an eloquent defender in you.'

'Ireland requires no defending! Oh, we've got to be submissive and orderly, I know! We like having all our offices of State filled by Englishmen and Scotchmen, and to see a member of your Royal Family

once every ten or fifteen years or so, and that's what makes us so loyal. I'd turn them all out and send them back across the sea, and get up the Harp without the Crown, for all the good it does us now.'

'This approaches treason-felony, Miss Scanlan,' observed Cunningham mildly. 'But I have listened to what you say, and will think it over, and I promise you I will never designedly say things likely to hurt Irish susceptibilities. Let us go a little further along this path. I know the way about here, and there is a place we shall come to overhanging the cliff, where we can get a view across the bay and out to sea—which ought to be good at night, as I see a great yellowness out eastward, which means, if we could see it, a risen moon.'

Nora said nothing. She was occupied in slowly recovering her composure—not to say temper—with a growing and soothing conviction that she had made herself absurd in Cunningham's estimation. She had not at all, but she thought she had. He was

amazed at her depth of feeling, and the flood of passionate eloquence and historic information called forth by it, and began to perceive that the opinion, long waning, that she was stupid, would have to be entirely dismissed.

‘Why, there’s more in her than in the giggling young tennis-players and cackling old hens of this place all put together,’ he thought; ‘she is in real earnest about something, which none of them are, except about their clothes, and she means what she says, even if she is all wrong and hopelessly one-sided.’

When they arrived, by a curving narrow path darkened by tall underwood, at the little round grass plateau at the edge of the cliff where they stood, protected from the precipice by a horseshoe-shaped iron fence waist-high, there was suddenly revealed the wide splendour of the summer sea with a great yellow distorted moon low down on its eastward horizon, just where the distant lighthouse stood at the foot of a sloping

promontory, and a broad, restless road of golden ripples spread towards them, interrupted by one black cutter at anchor.

They contemplated this scene for a few moments in the orthodox silence, which was broken by Nora, whom the quiet majesty of the moonlit sea had subdued to a meditative state of mind, and she said :

‘What a fool you must think me !’

‘Not at all. I was struck with the—the force of what you said, though I can’t admit it all as a perfectly fair description of the relations between Great Britain and Ireland. But you mustn’t go and imagine that I am a bitter enemy and oppressor because I don’t entirely agree with your view of the matter. I must judge by what I see and know, though I dare say you could tell me a great deal which I don’t know. I hope in time to see all the people in these islands living together in affection and unity, and the best way to make that happen is for them to exercise patience and forbearance towards one another.’

‘You can look at it in that calm and critical way. That is where we are at a disadvantage.’

‘Well, we can’t help our temperaments being what they are; but you will believe in the existence of my goodwill to the Irish future, however cold-blooded you may think it.’

‘You only say that to please me. You would not care if Ireland were sunk in the sea, really.’

‘It seems to me it’s not much good my saying anything. I don’t know what I have done to deserve all this.’

‘Oh, nothing, of course! It’s always the same. We put ourselves in the wrong by being excited, and you correct us calmly as if we were passionate children, and then reason with us like grown people.’ Then, after a few minutes of silence she went on: ‘There, Mr. Cunningham, I’ve treated you very badly and been very rude, and I’m sorry. You won’t go and talk about this, and make fun of me, will you?’

‘If you will condescend to trust me, I think you will find me trustworthy.’

‘Yes, I believe you are.’

And she turned to go back along the dark paths, and he with her. When they reached the lawn, they found the other young people grouped round the open French window of the drawing-room, where pale roses clustered, listening to Mr. Scheiner, who had just sat down to the piano and begun to sing :

‘ Si vous n’avez rien à me dire
Pourquoi venir auprès de moi ?
Pourquoi me faire ce sourire
Qui tournerait la tête au roi ?’

Mr. Scheiner sang and played remarkably well, as has been mentioned, and those accomplishments were a very useful ingredient of his social popularity.

Meanwhile, Mr. Smalley and the Vicar continued to mutter together a growling accompaniment about money. At the end of the song invisible applause came from the group at the window, whom Mr. Scheiner

could not see, as the lamps were lit in the room. Then Johnny Smalley went in and civilly invited him to take a cigarette on the lawn, which he graciously accepted, and was soon amusing the whole group of the 'young people' by his childlike mirth and fascinating apéry. For Scheiner could be very funny in a way of his own, if he tried, and could imitate nearly anything, in any language.

'Ah!' he said at last. 'Yes, what a wonderful summer night! Ha! Now come in, you all, and I will make you dance.' And he led the way to the window, which opened on to a terrace, passed in, sat himself down at the piano, and began 'Künstler-Leben.'

Now the terrace outside was paved with stone and coloured tiles, of a good breadth, with large vases at the salient angles, clustered over with creepers which grew from the ground outside at the bottom of the low walls supporting the terrace. Steps led down from the terrace to the lawn northwards, westwards, and south-

wards, approximately, the terrace being on the westward side of the house. And before long, Johnny, excited by the gay vigour of the waltz, started off with Nora, who turned out to be a remarkably good and graceful dancer, though no one had suspected her of anything so energetic. Dick soon followed with Hélène. Cunningham sat on the parapet wall and looked on with placid admiration, till he noticed the rather dismal expression of Miss Disney, who sat on an iron bench, tapping the ground with a little brown foot, whereon he took her and waltzed, a thing he had certainly not intended.

‘But,’ as he observed to her, ‘there’s a sort of diabolical fascination about that harmonious alien. He seems to be making everyone do what he likes, however opposed to their natural inclinations.’

‘That’s a graceful compliment to me.’

‘By Jove, yes! I didn’t mean it that way. My remarks applied solely to myself, not to you.’

‘I think that is a little worse. I don’t think I’d explain any more, if I were you.’

‘Very well. My friends, let us be merry, as Mr. Pecksniff said.’

‘Mr. Who?’

‘Pecksniff,’ replied Cunningham solemnly.

‘I don’t think we know him.’

‘No? Oh, you should.’ And so on. And after a time there was a change of partners. Hélène, as became the daughter of the house, sat down, while Dick danced with Jane, to the great delight of the latter, who was in her best romantic form in pink Liberty silk, and imagined that she ‘floated round the room, forgetful of all things but the voluptuous pulsations and intoxicating rhythm of Strauss’ band,’ and so forth, according to the canons of the literature which she loved.

Lilian was not a dancer. She was much too clever. Johnny was restored to Miss Disney, who was beginning to take a dislike to ‘that Irish girl,’ and ‘that Irish girl’

took a few turns with Cunningham. After that Mrs. Smalley came out and interfered :

‘ Now, I’m sure you are all very, very much obliged to Mr. Scheiner for the great pleasure he has given, and we must really insist on his finding himself a partner now, and I will try to take his place at the piano, though no one can *really* do that.’

‘ Ah, madame ! Let me go on playing for the young people ! I was young once upon a time, and I know what it feels to waltz to that music. It is my place to give back some of the pleasure I have had in the past. La ! Hep !’ And he plunged with a joyous face and lightning fingers into ‘ Neu-Wien.’ And they danced.

* * * * *

‘ He’s a good sort,’ said Johnny afterwards to Cunningham, when they and Dick Scanlan were taking tobacco and whisky-and-soda in a miscellaneous room called the schoolroom, used primarily for education, and generally for all kinds of ‘ messing,’ from art to cookery, where all

the superannuated comfortable armchairs went when their castors went lame, where gathered the most dog's-eared and beloved novels, the condemned photo albums, and the old Christmas numbers, 'and all disastrous things.'

'He is lively,' replied Cunningham; 'a little melodramatic about the eyes, and given to gassing in conversation, but clever, no doubt.'

'Oh, he's a lovely man!' said Dick, and sucked at his grog.

* * * * *

As Scheiner walked home in the moonlight, he sang to himself softly the air of the last waltz, and thought: 'That Irish girl is the gem of that collection, the swan of this duck-pond. I fancy I've tumbled on a soft place here. But oh, my stars—my three stars! That port!'

CHAPTER XIII.

IT has already been said that Miss Gibbs was one of the Redcliff residents. She was also an old resident, who remembered the village before the Riviera, and the villas, and the New District had been thought of. She lived in an old gabled house which her forefathers had lived in, and she possessed a beautiful garden, with shady walks down a fern-grown cleft, at the bottom of which a stream ran down to the sea. She had delightful cosy old rooms, with low ceilings and latticed hinge-windows—rooms filled with all kinds of ancient china and old-world odds and ends, and pervaded with a faded fragrance of *pot-pourri*. She also had an old walled kitchen-garden, with hoary old fruit-

trees and strawberry-beds galore. She possessed cows to furnish cream for the strawberries, and large meadows to furnish grass for the cows. And she was withal a strong-minded, sensible, kind-hearted old lady, with some old-fashioned views and prejudices on social behaviour and observances, a good notion of her own consequence as the last representative of an old county family, and something an old county accent, in which she pronounced her opinions audibly and without fear. She reminded one a little of Elizabeth, last of the Tudors, did Susan Ann, last of the Gibbises.

And her garden-party was an annual festival, a hardy annual, as Johnny Smalley said, to which all respectable residents with whom she was on visiting terms were invited, and glad to go, for Susan Ann did things handsomely when she entertained, and her fruits and wines and dairy produce were beyond reproach. She had some old male retainers, who were kept more for kindness' sake and auld lang syne than

because they were useful, and the services of Burbidge were engaged on these occasions to do the practical part of the waiting.

One of the first persons to arrive on the afternoon of her garden-party was old Mr. Gilchrist, the Rector, Cunningham's uncle, a tall and well-favoured old gentleman with a shaven face and white hair, who had preached in the Old Church in a black Geneva gown and white bands for forty years past, and carried with him a gentle suggestion of the eighteenth century. To him, after the first necessary remarks on the fineness of the day, and his apology for his wife's non-appearance on the ground of ill-health, Miss Gibbs proceeded to explain her difficulties about inviting Mr. Leopold Scheiner and his wife.

‘ You see, Mr. Gilchrist, I thought they were a couple of nasty foreigners, if you ask me, and nobody knew anything about ’em ; but Lady Gooch particularly ast me to do so, so I did, and you will see ’em both here.

They were not at home when I did call, so I can't tell you anything more.'

'I have heard little of them, and seen less. They are not parishioners of mine, and I am rather of a stay-at-home habit.'

'Well, from what I hear he's been the sensation of the place for the last month or more.'

'Oh ! And why ?'

'Well, you see, Mr. Gilchrist, he's a foreigner, to begin with, and he's got some sort of a plan to make Redcliff as vulgar as Brighton ; and the town is getting set by the ears about it, and think they are all going to make their fortunes. Then, they say he spends a deal of money.'

'That would tend to make him popular, no doubt.'

'And I believe the young ladies admire him, and that he is supposed to sing divinely, and play too. But, then, there's Mr. Satterthwaite, he says he's a nasty little Jew ; and, do you know, I *may* be rather uncharitable, but I rather felt inclined to agree with him,

only I know he's prejudiced because Mr. Smalley has taken Mr. Scheiner up, and Mr. Satterthwaite and Mr. Smalley are at daggers drawn, as you might say. However, I've asked them all here, and we'll see what they'll do.'

'Let us hope there will not be a breach of the peace.'

'Shall we see your nephew, Mr. Cunningham?'

'Yes. He told me he would be here in the course of time.'

Here Burbidge announced : 'General and Mrs. and Miss Barker!' and an elderly, dumpy woman came in, covered with black beads and a small white shawl. She had also a round red face, white sausage-shaped curls in front of the ears, and a blank aimless smile, which showed she had been brought up on the 'assume a pleasant expression and make yourself agreeable' plan. She greeted Miss Gibbs, sank on a sofa with her back to the window, and said how very fortunate it was for Miss Gibbs to

have such a fine day—quite Queen's weather, she called it. Behind her came a very thin, upright old man, with straggling white hair and long whiskers, a large bony nose, and deep-set eyes, the wildness of whose glare was mitigated by the milky circles of incipient cataract. He carried a tall hat of weird and obsolete design, and was dressed in thin black things, none of which made any pretence to fit. He was most gentlemanly and polite, however, and could converse tolerably rationally on any ordinary subject, unless some unfortunate accident turned the conversation towards public events, on which he would at once proceed to explain his system of interpreting the Apocalypse, with which he had dexterously intertwined the dimensions of the Great Pyramid. Many of the Redcliffites thought him clever, but difficult to understand. Strangers, who met him for the first time, thought him a little odd. Miss Barker was a tall, insignificant girl with swelled cheeks. The General shook hands with Mr. Gilchrist,

who was quite accustomed to him and began to talk at once about the fineness of the view from the window, which looked out seaward over the wooded cleft which has been alluded to, and the flowers in the garden, and like harmless and probably safe topics.

It was the custom at most Redcliff garden-parties not to let people go into the garden until they had been first tightly and warmly packed into a drawing-room, then driven arm-in-arm into a dining-room, where they stood two deep round a table and struggled for tea and fruit. After that they were allowed to escape, red and panting, into the garden. But at present the initial stages were to be gone through, like the first and second room at a Turkish bath. The voice of Burbidge was again heard :

‘ Mr. and Mrs. Paynter, Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Disney!’

And shortly they all began to appear in half-dozens, and Burbidge was constantly shouting, Miss Gibbs was standing at the door in stiff black brocaded silk, giving per-

petual handshakes, and the room was full of a confused din and gabble. By this time they were all talking about Mrs. Scheiner, who had only arrived a day or two before, and been seen by nobody so far.

Among other arrivals were Mr. and Mrs. Smalley, Hélène and Johnny, the Scanlans and Andrew Cunningham.

The Scanlans were the object of a certain amount of staring and whispering on the part of the rows of old ladies and gentlemen (nearly everyone in the room was over fifty, and several nearer seventy) on account of their novelty and their rumoured wealth.

General Barker asked Mr. Gilchrist who they were, and was told. Then he said he had not seen them at church, whereon some officious friend told him they were Catholics, a piece of information Mr. Gilchrist had purposely withheld, as it naturally set the General off, loosened the dog-shore, so to speak, of his monomania, of which the poor, courteous, mild and learned old Rector, being hemmed in by compact masses of guests, got

the full benefit, while the General ‘held him with his glittering eye,’ and poured out statistics about the increase of the Papal aggression, the dates of the French Revolution, the age of Mr. ——— But no ; we will *not* say who had the distinction just then of bearing the mark and number of the Beast.

A happy diversion was caused by Burbidge, who proclaimed with extra loudness, so as to be heard above the babble :

‘Mr. and Mrs. Leopold Scheiner!’

All voices were hushed, and there stood in the doorway a lady, small, fair and slender, her head upraised with a little inquiring tilt to one side, as saying, ‘Now, which of you paralyzed-looking old guys happens to be my hostess, I wonder?’ She had delicate features of the type known as aristocratic (which implies an aquiline nose, as all are aware), brownish-yellow eyes, comparatively dark eyelashes, and a pale complexion, so that the eyes and nose were the features which first caught one’s atten-

tion. She wore a black lace hat covered with long black ostrich feathers, a pale gray, clinging, thin silk dress, with a high waist and hanging skirt, in the style recently introduced at that time by Madame Bernhardt in a gruesome drama called 'La Tosca' (of which the Redcliff people hardly knew the existence. *They* wore 'improvers' in those days).

On her slender little hands were long-sleeved mushroom-coloured gloves, wrinkling up to the shoulders; on her finely-arched feet were black lace hose and shining little black shoes with paste buckles, and she carried a tall ebony stick-sunshade with a silver head. In her ears were emerald solitaires. Her 'figure' was a matter of opinion. In discussing the matter subsequently, the ladies usually said her dress was cleverly devised to conceal its deficiency. The gentlemen said they didn't know so much about that.

In any case, she was very *chic* (Mrs. Smalley's word), and very unlike anybody

else at Miss Gibbs' garden-party. If she intended to make a sensation, she succeeded.

Behind her was Scheiner, very spick-and-span in his yachting suit. Miss Gibbs opened her eyes rather wide, but shook hands with her customary heartiness, and Mrs. Scheiner stood quite at her ease in graceful poses, making complimentary remarks about Miss Gibbs' garden, view, house and situation in a low contralto voice and a slightly American accent, while the girls of Redcliff stared with all their eyes. Her husband went to make his salutations to such persons as he was acquainted with. Miss Gibbs was wondering to herself, 'Now, who shall I get to take this wonderful person in to refreshments? And ought I to send her in after Lady Gooch?' The upshot was that a few of the elder people were sent in first, and Mrs. Scheiner fell a prey to Mr. Disney, to whom she bowed with much grace and condescension, and prepared a manner and conversation in which deference to his ecclesiastic dignity

and social affability were happily mingled. She proposed to herself, until she had reconnoitred the *terrain* more fully, to make herself agreeable to everybody and anybody without distinction, and not to be too frivolous, and she imagined herself quite capable of carrying out that idea. Moreover, she had private intentions of her own, to find out if that volatile little husband of hers were really in danger of becoming attached to any young lady of Redcliff, and, if so, to which. You see, she knew him. She surveyed the party gathered round the long table in Miss Gibbs' big dining-room, where dim ancestors glared blankly from dim gilt frames—where Burbidge, assisted by two neat maids, served tea, coffee, claret and champagne cup—and observed to the Vicar confidentially :

‘What a number of very charming young ladies !’

(‘Nothing I need be afraid of *here* !’ was her private reflection.)

‘Indeed, yes. There is quite a galaxy.

I fear there is, however, not quite a proportionate number of young men. What may I get you? A cup of tea?

‘Coffee, if you will be so very kind.’

‘And some strawberries? Miss Gibbs has very fine strawberries—Margarets—no, British Queens, I think these are. I fancy you do not usually grow them quite so large in—er—abroad.’

He was a little vague just then as to what nation or land the lady was supposed to belong to.

‘And some strawberries. And cream. Delightful! I am just a child among such things. Now, tell me, monsignor’ (she knew that was nonsense, of course, but the title was a ‘try on,’ and the Vicar liked it and did not correct it: perhaps he did not hear), ‘who some of all these excellent people are.’

And Mrs. Scheiner consumed a liberal plate of strawberries and cream with great satisfaction, and nodded appreciation as the Vicar named the different persons to her.

She was, of course, only in a position to see a part of the company without turning to look at them in too obvious a manner. However, she was able to see the Smalleys, who had been described to her, on whom her husband was attending, and she was satisfied that, although the 'Miss' was a pretty enough girl, she was not of a kind Mr. Scheiner would be likely to take a serious interest in.

('Bah !' she thought ; ' I know that kind. Goes to church, eats tapioca-pudding, and is made of wood. Plays " Lieder ohne Worte " correctly, and tennis, and will marry a fox-hunter.')

Nora Scanlan she could not see, as she was on the same side of the table, and a small mob intervened.

Johnny Smalley she appreciated.

(' A good-looking boy. Vain. Just loves a good time. Rows boats and plays games. Might be amusing. I fancy that his mamma won't like me. Papa is a perfect terror.')

‘Now, will it be presuming on your kindness very much if I ask you for a glass of wine? I am still pretty tired from the journey, which was perfectly horrid.’

‘Not at all. Shall I get you a glass of claret-cup?’

Mrs. Scheiner hesitated, wrinkled up her nose and mouth in a funny way, with a confidential smile in her eyes, and then said, in that low, rather deep voice :

‘I believe if you were to offer me some champagne I would accept.’

Mr. Disney hurried off for the sideboard, where tall glass jugs stood cooling, interrupted on the way by an imperative voice, which said, ‘Edgar!’ It was Mrs. Disney.

‘Yes, dear.’

‘Will you get me some tea? I’ve lost General Barker in the crowd, or he has lost me and is gone wool-gathering, and has given me nothing.’

Mrs. Disney was, apparently, not in a good temper.

By the time the Vicar had struggled

between other people's elbows, waited for a fresh teapot to be brought, got possession of a cup, and found a cream-jug with anything in it, a general move towards the garden had begun, and when he arrived at the place where he had left Mrs. Scheiner, she was not there, but on the lawn, being gushed over sweetly by Mrs. Smalley, to whom Mr. Scheiner, of course, introduced her. Johnny took good care to be at hand on this occasion, and was introduced also. Hélène was standing conversing with some other people at a little distance.

On the way out of the dining-room, Johnny had come into momentary contact with Dick Scanlan, to whom he murmured :

‘What do you think of it?’

Dick replied, over his shoulder, in an equally confidential tone :

‘Paycock in a fowl-yard, my boy.’

So Johnny went out on the lawn, ‘shunted’ (as he gracefully expressed it to himself) the lady on whom he was supposed to be attending, and got presented to the

‘paycock,’ who gave him a gracious smile and a bow.

While Scheiner was engaged in conversation with Mrs. Smalley, Johnny took occasion to suggest to Mrs. Scheiner to come in and have some refreshment, as if it were quite a new idea, and the table was not already strewn with empty cream-jugs and plates full of strawberry remains.

She laughed, and replied :

‘Well, I should just love to do it ; but I have only two moments ago been eating quite a quantity of fruit. I have not quite enough audacity to present myself again—yet.’

‘Oh, can’t we pretend we are fresh people who haven’t had anything?’ said Johnny persuasively.

‘I think not. Let us examine the flowers, and perhaps later on we may——’

‘Tackle the dining-room without being afraid with any amazement. Perhaps you’re right. This is an awfully pretty place of Miss Gibbs’, isn’t it?’

‘Charming! Perfect! It is a beautiful idea to receive in a garden, and so English—quite English.’

‘Does she know she’s quoting, I wonder?’ thought Johnny. ‘Yes. Is this the first time you have been in England?’

Mrs. Scheiner walked a little way, and put a distance between her and the other group, and Johnny accompanied her.

‘Well, no; but I have not been here frequently.’

Johnny was anxious to get this showy lady to himself, to stroll in remoter parts of the garden, and perhaps down the cleft; but he was anxious, on the other hand, that everybody should know he was absorbing her attention. So he took a middle course, and suggested sitting on a curved iron garden bench; there they would be perfectly visible, while their conversation need not be overheard. Clever, diplomatic Johnny!

Mrs. Scheiner was glad enough to enter into this arrangement, because she was

amused with her cavalier, and intended to pump him thoroughly, and make a great friend of him, and because sitting on the garden bench would give her a better opportunity of incidentally showing her feet to advantage. So she sat down, observing :

‘ I am fatigued to death. I have travelled—a horrible journey ! I feel it still.’

‘ Did you come far ?’

‘ From London, yesterday. It was dreadfully hot in the train, and I am not very robust.’

‘ That is rather trying, certainly.’

‘ And I was obliged to come away without my maid, or I would have made her take all the trouble. But tell me now, I wish to know who some of these people are. I know you, and your mamma, and an ecclesiastic, who gave me strawberries. He was not amusing.’

‘ Old Disney—no. That ecclesiastic is not entertaining.’

‘ I sent him for some champagne, but he sort of got lost, or stolen, or melted away.

Ah ! Now, who is the tall young lady with black hair and a black costume ?

Johnny looked, and replied :

‘ That is Miss Scanlan, a cousin of mine.’

Mrs. Scheiner looked at her and at Johnny, who was endeavouring to assume an indifferant demeanour.

‘ Yes, she is quite pretty. She is about the most attractive girl here. I had not seen her before.’

‘ Do you think so ?’

‘ Yes. And I imagine you think so, too.’

‘ I ? Oh yes, *I* think so.’

‘ Aha ! And the tall, meagre gentleman with the black moustache, speaking to her, does he think so ?’

‘ Oh, that’s Cunningham, an old friend of mine. He and I were fellow-students, and we share chambers—apartments, don’t you know—in London.’

‘ I understand. And this young lady, your charming cousin, does her family reside here ?’

‘ Her family consists of one brother ; he’s knocking about here somewhere—jolly chap. They are staying with us at present, but they are going into a house of their own very shortly, a place near here, called The Oaks.’

‘ They are rich, then ?’

‘ Oh, rather !’

Just then Nora looked at Johnny for an instant, as did also Cunningham, and then both turned away and strolled about the garden. Johnny thought they laughed, and felt vaguely uneasy, and said :

‘ I say, would you like to take a turn round the place for a change ? It’s pretty, and—and I have an idea that I know where the fruit grows. You needn’t mind doing it ; I mean, you need have no scruples of etiquette about it.’

‘ About stealing strawberries ?’

‘ No, about walking all over the place. Everybody does it. If you look round, you will see that nobody stops here just close to the house, except the old cats and owls.

This part of the country swarms with old ladies and gentlemen who have nothing to do, and they are all consumed with curiosity about you, you may depend on it.'

'I think you are very sarcastic, Mr. Smalley. But let us walk, by all means.'

Johnny, who had observed symptoms of an approach on the part of both his parents, evaded that contingency by a strategic movement towards the cleft, which, without wearying the reader with minute descriptions, I may simply say was eminently adapted for giving cover to any number of wandering couples, and was already concealing several young people from their not over-anxious chaperons. This cleft was to Miss Gibbs' garden-parties what the stairs and conservatory are to a ball.

Mrs. Scheiner admired the scene, which was really beautiful, and said to Johnny :

'When you think you are quite safe from—from owls and cats, I shall want to sit down again. I see that contingency is provided for.'

‘Delighted, I’m sure!’

And Johnny found a bench in a retiring umbrageous nook, with a glimpse of the sea, blue now, with white yachts on it. Mrs. Scheiner sank into a graceful pose on the seat, leaning on her long black stick, which she clasped with one hand some eight or ten inches below the top, and looked very much like a figure in a picture. She looked at Johnny, and said:

‘Now you have brought me here, you’ve got to amuse me, or I shall go back again. How do people amuse themselves here?’

‘Very little. There’s a ball—a costume ball—soon, when the regatta begins. What they mostly do is to play tennis, go to church, and talk about each other. I expect you will find it shocking slow, if you’ve been accustomed to Vienna and Paris and New York, and all that sort of thing.’

‘You find it not—amusing?’

‘Oh, I don’t know. It is all very well for awhile, in fine weather, for me, because

I have some people and one or two friends, and can boat, and so on ; but I can't say I'm sorry to go back to town.'

' Ah, I see, you are a man of the world, and you feel *désorienté* in a society which I will call—in strict confidence—provincial.'

' Provincial ! Well, rather. I shall be anxious to hear your views after you have had a good round of garden-parties, at each of which you will meet General and Mrs. and Miss Barker, Admiral and Mrs. Moore and multitudinous Master Moores, the Paynters, and your interesting friend the ecclesiastic, and all the other people you see here. And they will talk mostly about the weather and each other ; and all they know of the Continent, if anything, is Switzerland in September.'

' You are very cynical, are you not ?'

' Not at all. I am merely describing dreary facts.'

' And you are forgetting the charming cousin with the black hair. You admire dark beauties ?'

‘ Well, not as a rule.’

Mrs. Scheiner laughed heartily for one second, a very pleasant laugh, difficult to describe, rapid, in three ascending but not consecutive notes. Were I a musician I would describe it better. Johnny waited with an inquiring grin.

‘ Not as a rule ! And how many fair ladies go to form the rule to which this dark lady is an exception ?’

‘ Whatever the number is, it has been very recently increased by one,’ replied Johnny.

Mrs. Scheiner smiled and bowed.

‘ *Très bien !* Seems I was right when I thought I had found at least one man of the world here. You had better come and see me, and amuse me, when I am fatigued with the *banalités* of the society which you lead me to anticipate.’

‘ Thanks awfully ! I shall be delighted.’

‘ My husband, is he a success here ? They like him ?’

‘ Oh, rather ! Especially the ladies.’

‘ No doubt. They are his weak point.’

‘ Strong point, I should say.’

‘ Is he still—general, or has he yet become—particular ?’

‘ Well, oh, quite general, of course. How could he be otherwise ?’

‘ Ah well, he can take care of himself. Mr. Smalley, charming as your society is, I must go back and place myself *en évidence*, or your friends here will think me “ shocking.” No doubt they do already, but that is all your fault. Come along !’

And she rose to rejoin the general throng, and was soon conversing in a sprightly manner with Redcliff notables, under the wing of Mrs. Smalley, who called her ‘ dear,’ and acted chaperon, and gave good advice, to the great entertainment of her victim. Johnny fell back on Nora, who was at the moment standing alone, and said to him with a friendly smile :

‘ Well, Johnny, I thought you’d deserted me for good.’

Johnny looked a trifle foolish, and said :

‘ Oh, bosh ! I was anxious to see what she was like, that’s all.’

‘ But you needn’t apologize for that. And what is she like, at all ? *I think she’s like the pictures on the outside of chocolate boxes.*’

‘ She’s a very clever woman.’

‘ Is she, now ? Well, that’s more than I am.’

‘ I’m not so sure about that ; but you are rather given to burying your talents under a bushel, and taking the bushel off unexpectedly.’

‘ Of course I’m a benighted Papist, and not supposed to know ; but I thought the talent was put in the ground, and ’twas a candle they put under a bushel.’

‘ There you are, you see, my lady, sitting on me where I should have thought I was pretty safe. And how have you been amusing yourself?’

‘ Oh, I don’t know. Mr. Cunningham’s been talking to me.’

‘I’ll bet he has.’

‘He introduced me to his uncle, the Rector. Isn’t he a dear old man?’

‘Old Gilchrist? Delightful! Like a bit of rare old china, or a Waterloo veteran, or anything precious and antique. He’s a trifle too learned for me, though, and a little given to prolix anecdote.’

Here Mrs. Smalley arrived, accompanied by Mrs. Scheiner, saying:

‘I think, Nora dear, it is time we looked for Miss Gibbs to say good-bye. I know on occasions of this kind it is quite the received thing to slip away without calling attention to it, but I don’t like to leave such an old and dear friend as Miss Gibbs without thanking her for our pleasant afternoon.’

‘And our pleasant strawberries,’ said Johnny; ‘don’t forget them. Let’s see if there are any more before you go.’

‘You can stay, if you like; I suppose you and Dick and Mr. Cunningham will be independent of us?’

‘ All right.’

‘ Mrs. Scheiner, let me introduce you to my niece, Nora Scanlan, who is living with us just at present. This is our new neighbour, Nora. Johnny, I wish you would go and find your father.’

Johnny went, and, meeting Cunningham, stopped, and said :

‘ I say, look at those two ! Aren’t they a contrast ?’

Cunningham looked at the dark, stately girl, with her sincere blue eyes and shy silences, and at the other woman, who might almost have stepped out of a sketch in a French comic paper, and he replied :

‘ Contrast ! Yes, I should think they were. Who introduced them ?’

‘ Mother.’

‘ Oh, I see. Johnny, look here, I want to murmur a word in thine ear.’

‘ Well, murmur it later on, when I’ve found the governor and fired my people out. I’ll be back directly.’

Cunningham then saw Scheiner arrive

and join the little group, bowing and making a few observations to Nora, and ultimately withdrawing his wife to make salaams to Miss Gibbs, and get into the landau from the Royal Riviera which awaited them, in which they made a (nearly) royal progress homewards, being bowed to by gentle and simple along the country road, and through the street of Redcliff.

Mr. Paynter then happened to come across Cunningham, and accosted him :

‘Dashing couple, those two! I say, I told you that woman would be spicy, eh?’

‘I should think so, probably.’

In a community chiefly concerned in the gratification of foolish curiosity and the propagation of badly - imagined fiction, Mr. Paynter was *primus inter pares*, and combined with these talents an exasperating, feeble jocularity.

Then Johnny Smalley joined Cunningham, and the latter proposed a stroll along the top of the cliff and a smoke before going

home to get ready for dinner, and Johnny agreed.

Dick Scanlan had gone home in the Smalleys' carriage. And Miss Gibbs' party soon resolved itself into its constituent elements.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was a warm, still summer day, one of many ; but on this particular afternoon, for some reason or other, a haze had appeared, both over the sea to the eastward and southward, so that the white sails, although made apparent by the sun, had soft outlines, and belonged to no visible hull, and over the inland valleys full of trees and ascending slopes of grass and yellowing corn, so that they were veiled and lightened by a mist which seemed to hold the sunlight in solution at comparatively short distances.

It was the aerial perspective usually far off brought into the foreground. The groves of oaks looked like the clustered roofs of

misty towns with poplar steeples standing here and there. On the seaward side, the bay was quite visible, with its yellow and white shore, its bathing-machines, boats, lobster-pots, and loungers, though, as it was about six o'clock, most of the children and nursemaids had gone home to tea. Fort Romer, on the side or arm of the bay opposed to the cliff where Johnny and his friend were walking up and down, was dim, but visible, and the white chalky road over the down on which the fort stood continued to be visible after the green down on each side of it had disappeared in haze.

‘There’s a bit of a fog coming up,’ observed Johnny, as he strode along, a straw hat on the back of his head, a cigarette in his mouth, one hand in his trouser pocket, the other switching at grass stalks with a cane.

‘There is,’ replied Cunningham, who seemed in a more sombre frame of mind, and sucked thoughtfully at an old briar pipe. ‘Almost as thick,’ he added, ‘as the ob-

security which surrounds our recent social acquisitions.'

'As how?'

'Doesn't it seem to you that they have been rather taken on trust?'

'Oh, well, you know what the people are here. What can you expect?'

'I know the people here. Like the people in many other places, they are mostly fools, and a high co-efficient of folly is what one expects in their formulæ. But there are other people in whom you in particular, and I to some indirect extent, are interested and concerned.'

'What is there against these two? It is true Scheiner is a bit of an ape, but he's an agreeable and accomplished ape. Then Mrs. is—well, she's a bit of an ape, too, but of a different and more pleasing species. She's a jolly sight cleverer and more amusing than the girls here. Not quite a girl, either—seven-and-twenty, if she's a day. But that's much better than nineteen. More sense, more knowledge of t'other from which.'

‘M! A good deal more, I’m thinking.’

‘Well, what do *you* think they are?’

‘I don’t know ; that’s why I want to know.’

‘If they were anything not quite on the square, they wouldn’t have such a lot of money, and spend it. I mean, if they are able to live in rather better style, on the whole, than anybody here, except, perhaps, the Scanlans, and pay cash down for it, they can’t find much inducement to cheat at cards, or something melodramatic of that kind. Fact is, we’re so fearfully insular still, in spite of Cook and Gaze and Caygill, that the mere fact of people belonging to another nation is liable to be “took down and used again ’em,” as the police say.’

‘Perhaps it is. But having nothing definite to allege, I don’t allege anything. I only say that I should like to know more about them.’

‘You probably will, as they are going to stay on and take a house.’

‘ I probably will. You seemed interested in the lady.’

‘ Yes, she’s great fun. I drew her a good deal.’

‘ So I imagined at the time,’ replied Cunningham, smiling grimly; ‘ and what did you derive?’

‘ Oh, a variety of things. We talked about the people here, for example.’

‘ Did she tell you much about them?’

‘ Well, no, of course, I told her about them. And, well, we mentioned Scheiner. She seemed anxious to know if he had formed an attachment as yet to any Red-cliff womankind. I told her not, as far as I was aware.’

‘ Oh, she did, did she? And what else did your persuasive, many-counselling honey tongue get out of her?’

‘ She told me she had travelled all the way from London without stopping, and was very tired. I must say I found her extremely amusing and clever. I suppose one can be that, even here, without incurring suspicion?’

‘ Ah well, we shall see. Let us hope the fog will clear. It’s time you went home to dinner now, and I must go to the Rectory.’

‘ All right. Ta-ta.’

Cunningham’s uncle and aunt did not dine at seven, but at half-past one, and there was cold supper and table-beer at eight, before and after which Cunningham was in the habit of working in the library at a book he was writing on Ethics, historical and theoretical, and as applicable to human law, custom, conduct, and etiquette. It was a good, quiet, comfortable, well-stocked library, with windows looking over the Rectory lawn and fields where the rooks cawed in the high elm-trees, and catching a glimpse of the sea, and Cunningham and his uncle both usually spent the evening there with their silent friends from the shelves, pausing occasionally for a fragment of conversation on many high matters. Both took tobacco, and Cunningham used to bring his uncle presents from London of

wonderful and cunning mixtures, when he came down to spend parts of his vacation at Redcliff, as was his wont. Mrs. Gilchrist sat in the drawing-room and read library novels of a mild description, interspersed with religious polemical periodicals, and was occasionally known to go to sleep over them.

The Rectory was a stone house of irregular design, with three large gables in a row, roofed with red tiles which had long ago turned brown and all sorts of other subdued colours, and dark-green ivy climbed over the walls, round the chimneys and corners of the high-backed roof, and round the little projecting attic windows with their small leaded lattices. The house was built in the days when people knew that a house ought to be tall, and to have a roof—a real roof—to throw off rain and snow, to keep the inhabitants dry and cool, or warm, according to season, and be good to look at, as a roof honestly made of strong timber, at the proper angle, and covered with well-

cooked red tile made of honest clay, fulfilling its right purpose in the right way, always is good to look at, and a relief to the mind and the eye after the showy pretences and dreary obtuse-angled slate lids of latter-day architecture, whose design is devoid of invention, meaning, or dignity, the composition of whose bricks and mortar is the mystery of iniquity, whose drainage is the accursed thing.

In the evening, after supper, Cunningham and his uncle sat in the library, of which the open windows admitted the evening air, and the fragrance of fresh-mown lawn and the flowers, which seemed stronger after sunset than at other times. The Rector smoked a long-stemmed clay pipe, such as the Vicar of Wakefield or Parson Adams might have enjoyed, in one armchair, and his tall, grave, sallow nephew smoked his faithful old briar in another.

Cunningham was an orphan, an orphan of five-and-thirty, and Mr. Gilchrist had been the nearest thing to a parent he had had for

years, and they were on perfectly confidential terms. The Rector was saying, 'Going to work to-night, Andrew?' with a turn of his white head towards Andrew's habitual end of the table, covered with written papers and open books.

'Just awhile, after they bring the lamp in. How did you enjoy the junketing this afternoon?'

'A very pleasant gathering, in a very pretty garden—though I think I prefer my own garden with no one in it to any other filled with the gay world. But that is selfish, no doubt. I was struck with the growth of Redcliff since I have known it. There were so many faces there almost or quite strange to me. I remember when Redcliff was a scattered village of stone, thatched cottages, with a coastguard station, and a few boats and a little lobster and shrimp fishing, and the old inn and the alehouse down by the shore, and the only shops were the post-office and Redward's—Redward sold nearly everything anyone could reasonably want in those days

—and the gentry lived out in the country round, the Gooches and four or five other families. In Redcliff there was old Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs, Miss Gibbs' father and mother, and the doctor—very good people they were—gone now where I shall soon follow them. And now there is a new town, new gentry, a new doctor, a fine new hotel, a new church, and a new parson. Well, perhaps that's just as well. The old parson could never manage to keep 'em all in order, or please 'em with all the new-fangled tricks, and learn to preach ten-minute sermons with nothing in them likely to offend anybody's susceptibilities or make him feel the least uneasiness of conscience. I heard some lass at this party to-day say, "Dear good man! he is getting rather prosy, isn't he?" after I had been telling a really remarkably amusing story—I don't know if you know it? It's about the jackdaw that got into the church one evening.'

'Let me see, what was that?' said Cunningham gravely, as one who had known

the story well since he was nine years old.

‘ Well, old Dr. Timmins, who was here before the present man, had a tame jackdaw, which used to walk about the garden and have the run of the house. Everybody knew Dr. Timmins’ jackdaw, and a very clever bird it was; wonderfully appropriate things it said sometimes, I must say. Well, one Sunday afternoon Jack took it into his queer little head to go for a walk, and he actually followed the doctor to evening church, and, as it was getting dark, was not noticed stepping along in his black suit. And the church, as you may recollect, was not well lit. There were two or three oil lamps for the congregation—most of ’em couldn’t read, and knew their hymns by heart; we always finished off with “ Abide with me ” or “ Sun of my soul ”—and old Mrs. Batt used to light two candles in the pulpit for me to preach by. Well, I was publishing some banns, which, to tell the truth, I ought to have done at the morning service, but had

forgotten, and when I got as far as "Harriet Poyns, spinster," Master Jack sang out from a dark corner, "I don't believe it! I don't believe it!" Now, there was a certain amount of scandal in circulation about this Harriet Poyns at the time, which made the interruption the more pointed, and I happen to know, though I did not tell that part of the story to the young people, that I baptized her baby five months after her marriage. That baby is now the man Blow, who has the boat people often go out in, and a very good fellow, I believe, but for a trifle too constant an assiduity to the ale-pot.'

Cunningham laughed.

'Very good indeed!'

'I thought of poor Mr. Hardcastle and Old Grouse in the gun-room when I heard that minx's *sotto-voce* commentary. By the way, what a very well-looking and agreeable young lady that was to whom you introduced me! Now, she listened respectfully to everything I said, and made intelligent replies. Who did you say she is?'

‘She is a Miss Scanlan. She and her brother are relatives of the Smalleys, staying with them at present, but intending shortly to occupy The Oaks as residents.’

And Cunningham told the story of the Scanlans, which we know already.

‘Ah! Well, I shouldn’t be surprised if she made some of the young men’s hearts beat quicker before she has been here long. That foreign-looking gentleman seems a very agreeable fellow. Smalley introduced me to him. Smalley was rather deliberate—he generally is—not to say long-winded, in his explanation afterwards; but I really failed to understand who this gentleman really was. And that very smart, fantastic-looking body—is that his wife?’

‘So I am given to understand. The fact is, that nobody seems to know much about these two aliens. They spend money, it appears, and that would be a social guarantee for Beelzebub in Redcliff, as in larger places.’

‘He seems a pleasant, boyish fellow. And

good-hearted, I should say. I saw him one morning—you know, I have an old-fashioned habit of early rising—well, one morning, while most of the ladies and gentlemen were dreaming, I happened to be pottering about, and I saw this Mr. What's-his-name talking in a friendly way to a poor seafaring man, a dingy Odysseus who hangs about the shore for odd jobs, when he could not have known that anyone saw him. My sight is bad, but it really looked more like silver than copper he gave him. Now, I take it that to choose such a solitary time is rather like not letting the left hand know what the right hand does, eh ?

‘Yes, perhaps. Hullo ! there goes Gad Asher ! Getting pretty old, isn't he ?’

Gad Asher was gardener to the Rectory, and drove Mrs. Gilchrist out in a low pony-carriage as well—when he could. His gardening consisted of looking on with shaking head, tremulous hands, and watery eyes while the Rector did the work, and his driving consisted of sitting in an old black coat and

tall hat of the Rector's, both far too big for him, along with his mistress, who held the reins. He was unable to get out, open the front gate, shut it, and climb into his seat again under about ten minutes, while the pony, well used to these proceedings, and about the same age in pony proportion, waited cheerfully. That pony was a very good waiter. He seized any excuse for waiting.

‘Yes, Gad Asher is getting old. He couldn’t manage to open the gate at all the other day, and began to cry and say he was an old man and getting silly. Well, I don’t like to tell him he’s past his work—not that he does any—because he wouldn’t like it. Besides, people might say the same of me—do as it is, I dare say.’

Here the lamp was brought in, and Cunningham disposed himself to work at his historical, theoretical and applied ethics, while the Rector had recourse to the ‘Voiages, Nauigations, Trafiques and Discoueries’ com-

piled by one Richard Hakluyt, sometime preacher.

And in those humane studies we will leave them, the innocent, golden-hearted old man and the mature and world-experienced young man, and go to society of a wholly different and perhaps more entertaining character.

CHAPTER XV.

A FEW days after the garden-party at Miss Gibbs' place, Mrs. Scheiner was finishing lunch, or breakfast, alone in her sitting-room at the Royal Riviera. Scheiner had gone out in a great hurry, with a fresh carnation in his coat, on business, and had laid special stress on the importance of having lunch served at mid-day punctually. Wherefore Mrs. Scheiner was not the least surprised to find that, when she had nearly finished that meal, it was one o'clock, and there was as yet no vestige of her husband. So she took a little fruit in a leisurely way, cracked an almond or two, regretted that there was no one to 'Philippine' with, and then went and sat in an easy-chair near the window, causing

Carl, the waiter, to put a small cup of coffee and a glass of Martell on a little table beside her. And then she took up the paper and picked out such little items as interested her. She wore a gray silk tea-gown with a gathered pink silk front and a lavish display of pink ribbons, had her hair twisted round in a quasi-classic knot which looked careless and simple, but was in reality a work of skill.

Towards half-past one Scheiner hurried into the room, and walked rapidly up and down it, laying his hat in one place, his gloves in another, and his cane in a third, and talking all the time.

‘Awfully sorry I’m late, dear! Couldn’t possibly get away sooner.’

‘You’re the principal sufferer. Want some lunch?’

‘No, don’t want anything, thanks. I’ll just take a glass of wine and bit of bread. There, perhaps I’d better have a little something. What have you been having? *Œufs sur le plat*, I see. Well, I’ll just have a couple of

aufs sur le plat.' Here he rang the bell.
'What else did you have?'

'Broiled steak and tomato *farcî*.'

'Sounds convincing. Oh, Carl, ja! Sie wollen mir das Vergnügen thun, und mir eine Portion Eier, steak, so was bringen nicht wahr?'

'Ja wohl, Herr.'

'Und Carl! Hold on! Auch noch 'ne Halbflasche Wein. Well, I was just going to tell you, I've been holding a meeting—my sins, such a meeting! You would never believe what wonderful fools some fools can be till you've heard them discuss a practical project for the advancement of their own interests.'

'Do sit down, any way. What was it—this Casino of yours?'

'Naturally.'

'Do you imagine it's ever going to come off?'

'Rather! Thousands in it. That Casino Company is going to completely renovate your toilet, my dear. We'll have a bottle

of fizz at dinner to-night on the strength of it.'

'Have you paid the bill here, yet?'

'Going to give them a cheque to-morrow morning. I was just going to mention that. Well, this meeting. There was Papa Smalley, and our friend Paynter, and Sir Atkinson Gooch, who looked as if he wished he was anywhere else, and Mr. Satterthwaite. He differs violently on political subjects with his neighbours. Remember, when you are talking with most of the people here, you may safely abuse Mr. Gladstone, but with old man Satterthwaite you must allow yourself to be convinced that he is the hope (under Providence) of the age. He is a *bourgeois* who once owned a fabric of some kind, lacks *suaviter in modo* and education. They are all highly educated and exclusive in Redcliff, so he is not popular. He belongs to some dissident evangelical sect or other, drinks no wine, has a singular pronunciation, and, in short, as Master Johnny Smalley remarked to me one day, he is a rank outsider.

He has piles of money, but only spends it on his house, and his kitchen, his garden, and the poor, and trash of that sort. Oh, eggs! Gut, und schenken-Sie mir ein Glas Wein aus, ja? And, then, he adheres to Consols as the limpet to its rock. He is a bigoted, *bourgeois* British bounder, narrow, obstinate, ignorant and cunning.'

'Didn't he seem struck with your Casino Company?'

'Not a little bit.' And Scheiner laughed merrily as he absorbed the fluid remains of his eggs with a piece of bread, and tossed off a glass of wine. 'We had the Town Hall as the scene of our inaugural meeting. Town Hall sounds spacious, but is about the size of a large bathing-machine, is lighted internally with gas, and supplied with the same to breathe, I should surmise. Well, there we were, the gentry keeping together in a clump and gossiping in undertones, and the tradesmen doing ditto. There was one Ellis, a builder, a stout man with a red head, who, it seems, is the Mayor, and there were one or two

grocers, drapers, the tailor, the man from this hotel, and a few more, more particularly Mr. Bailey, popularly known as Sam Bailey, a person of immense importance, because he brews all the beer, and seems to own all the public-houses. The gentry just crawl to him, because he controls practically the whole Conservative vote ; but they despise and ridicule him privately, as a consolation for having to tolerate him as a sort of equal publicly, and to make flattering references to him in speeches. He is, socially speaking, an insufferable ass, but not more so than several of the resident gentry—Paynter, for example—and can go them better a good many points by being a man of business. Our meeting was supposed to be of a private and informal character ; consequently nobody knew exactly what to do, except, as I say, to gabble in undertones with one another on irrelevant topics. I therefore, as wire-puller, impelled Smalley to propose somebody—not me—as chairman. These things have to be done in the traditional

way, you know. So Smalley gets up and blows, and says: "Er, gentlemen" (while I hammer the floor hard with my stick), "I propose that the chair be taken by Sir Atkinson Gooch!" The gentry all said "Hear, hear!" and some of the tradesmen, notably Mr. Sam Bailey, who supplies the house, I suppose, thumped with sticks on the floor. Admiral Moore begged to second that, and Sir Atkinson Gooch was about to make a mild but tedious speech about the unexpected honour, and his permanent anxiety for the welfare of the locality, when a little Radical chemist, of a rueful countenance, very slight, with sloping shoulders, over-weighted by a very long iron-gray beard, moved that the chair be taken by "Mr. Mayor." The gentry looked extremely shocked, a small minority of the tradesmen hammered very hard and quickly on the floor, but no one seemed desirous of seconding it, until Mr. Satterthwaite did so. It then became perfectly evident that this representative collection of Redcliff cretinism

was going to split on purely political grounds, and that whatever one side said or did would be blindly opposed by the other. That was a lively beginning. Well, the wretched thing was put to the vote, Gooch getting it by a large majority. The minority looked pretty sick. Mild old Gooch let off his speech about the unexpected honour and the welfare of his native place, and all that, and tagged on something about how far it was from his wishes ever to do anything to set class against class, and peace was patched up for a time. Then I was invited to set forth my views, as the Originator of the Scheme. I did so. I talked a long time.'

'Yes?'

'Yes. I tried to put the thing as clearly as possible, and repeated the main points several times over, while they all looked at me as if I were a Learned Pig, or an Industrious Flea, or something exotically humorous of that kind. When I'd done, Admiral Moore rose and most stupidly asked if the proposed undertaking was intended to

interfere in any way with the Club? I made a note, and waited for more questions. Mr. Bailey arose and declared that, as it was a notorious fact that the Club got all its supplies from the Stores in London, it had no claim for any consideration whatever, which drew applause from the High Street side of the house. Unfortunately, it also drew Mr. Satterthwaite, who, after grimly commenting on the fact that the Club had as good a right to buy in any market it pleased as the tradesmen of High Street had to deal with what wholesale house *they* pleased, proceeded to his main point, which was that the proposed Casino, though perhaps profitable in the worldly sense—old Tartuffe! as if he were not rolling in profits in the worldly sense—would be demoralizing in the extreme, especially to the young, by promoting the consumption of intoxicating liquors, gaming, dancing, and every kind of extravagance and frivolity. That was inevitable, if it was to succeed, therefore he should oppose it “root and

branch." As a magistrate he should make a point of refusing a license to it. This fetched up Smalley, who bellowed that he, as a magistrate, should make a point of insisting on granting the license. Here there was a good deal of applause, because everyone was delighted at the prospect of a row, and the meeting again became divided on purely political lines, and Mr. Sam Bailey was heard using extremely free language to the little druggist with the beard, who leapt up, shouting, "Mr. Mayor! I mean Mr. Chair! Let me speak! I will be 'eard!" Loud noises, during which the chemist seemed to wander on to the Land Question, and was pronounced out of order, and held down, and choked off. At length I got a show, and explained that as we were going to make the Casino private and exclusive, no license would be required at all. Loud applause from the Sam Bailey faction. The chemist broke out in a fresh place and yelled at the top of his voice, "Bogus club! bogus club!" and Bailey retorted, "You're a bogus 'umbug,

that's what you are !” Loud laughter. *Il a l'esprit très fin, ce beau brasseur, tu sais.* Scheiner dropped into another language occasionally, for no apparent reason. ‘Then we had a resolution, to the effect that this preliminary and informal meeting agreed to consider the general idea of the scheme, as submitted, and to request me to put it in writing and set forth details and so on, with a view to a subsequent conference. The division, which carried the resolution easily enough, of course had the effect of firing out the temperance interest as represented by Satterthwaite and the bearded apothecary, so that now I have a crowd to drive who are all on the same side politically, and that's the biggest side here.’

‘You seem to have had a daisy of a meeting. What are you going to do now?’

‘I'm going out directly to get my hair cut. Then I am going to get at each director—the ones I mean to have, you know—privately, so as to have a list ready. I shall have to take a good deal of time over

that. Of course, we've got Papa Smalley. He is a very wealthy man, if Paynter is to be relied on. Paynter is my favourite pump, you know. I gather that the bulk of the Smalley property consists of some land at or near Portsmouth, which was once grass or potatoes, or something equally interesting, but is now streets of houses, and of great value. Now, that is a kind of property which is not difficult to realize, and when realized ought to help to start this Casino in a handsome way. It's always a mistake to be stingy at the start in an enterprise like this. I want you to help, as you know how, in putting the right ideas into people's heads here on this matter. Your tact and your charm will often be more convincing than my arguments and figures. You'll do that, dear, won't you ?

And Scheiner stood over his wife and stroked her head with a light, lingering caress. She looked up at him with a rather sad smile, and replied :

‘ Well, I'll try. But——’

That 'but' was the unspoken recollection of all the enthusiastic schemes, promising enterprises, and perfectly certain speculations which Leopold Scheiner had begun eagerly, organized with tireless energy, and at last either forgotten, grown tired of, or dropped because he, and some few investors and creditors interested in them, had found their fingers getting burnt. Then they, the investors and creditors, used hard words, which Scheiner thought most unjust, as he was working as much for their benefit as his own, he would say. His friend the Earl of Croaghpatrick, a dry, dissipated, lean nobleman of about forty-nine, perpetually requiring the loan of fifty pounds, and addicted to the practice profoundly termed guinea-pigging, observed once: 'Well, Leo, you look cheerful. Been succeeding in some new failure ?'

'But I tell you it's all right. I'm really in a good thing this time, and I've got all the strings of these wooden marionettes, all the reins of this team of mules and jackasses

in my hands now. Crow's got to be in it, of course. His name's good, and it's only fair to him to give him the chance of pickings when there's a good thing going. And you can help here very much.'

'Very well. I tell you, I'll try.'

Kitty Scheiner had sometimes had nasty things said about her, and even to her, concerning her share in her husband's enterprises ; but she could assume, should occasion demand, such a serene, intangible dignity as to disarm such attack or such suspicion. She had a perfectly clear conscience, because she knew she was doing, or endeavouring to do, what was right. Right, of course, was what she happened to want to do at the time. It will probably not be asserted that there is anything surprisingly unusual in that. She did not wish to mislead or deceive anybody. She allowed herself to be persuaded into believing in each new enterprise by her fluent and plausible Leo, whom she loved with an extreme and jealous proprietary passion, and having believed, she naturally

made it her duty to promote such enterprise to the best of her ability. And yet men who had been induced, under the influence of her charms, to put money into something out of which neither it nor the expected profit ever came, went about saying things about her which, as has been said, her conscience entirely absolved her from deserving. Did she really believe—still believe—in Leo Scheiner, or did she force herself to go through the habitual formula of believing, and try to narcotize the terrible doubt arising in her mind from time to time, as to whether she had not given her love and her faith away, and got nothing in return, to an incompetent, shallow, vain, selfish humbug, whose stock-in-trade was fluent plausibility, some drawing-room accomplishments, and a handsome face? Yet Leo could not be a humbug, she reasoned, for he quite believed in himself and his schemes too, while they lasted. ‘Crow,’ as they both affectionately termed the ‘guinea-pigging’ Earl, who acted as friend of the family to both of them, as a

sort of unofficial uncle to Kitty Scheiner, and was a man given on occasions to some plainness of speech, had said, in that queer, dry, weary voice of his, through his teeth, as he stood in a faultless frock-coat and flower, long tight-trousered legs, long well-shaped, pointed feet, before the fireplace in the rooms the Scheiners had occupied in London, with his bony long fingers clasped behind him :

‘ You know, Kitty, this is a thing that gets me. I’m a shady character, and sell my good name at intervals for money, just as ladies occasionally sell their good name for the same consideration, and perhaps I do one or two other little things unnecessary to go into, the main point of which consists in getting money somehow. But I am perfectly aware of it all. I know that I am walking with my eyes open straight towards whatever modern substitute for the bottomless pit the scientific fellows may have left us, as well as I know what the young boys with the shaven faces and cigarettes say of

me at the clubs. But what gets me, what absolutely shocks my experience of human nature, is that this Leo of yours really believes himself to be a perfectly honest and virtuous man, endowed with great intellectual gifts to be used for the benefit of his fellow-creatures, and, incidentally, for his own. That you should believe in him would be less surprising. Many a clever and charming woman has believed in an inflated fraud, only you don't believe in him. You only pretend you do, because you are in love with him, and his face, and his talk, and his music, and his laughter, and his whole bag of tricks. One can't help liking Leo. I like him. I liked him from the first day, when we each tried to induce the other to drink a particular wine we were both privately interested in pushing. But I should respect him more if he were as successful in deceiving other people as he is in deceiving himself.'

'Leo is an old dear. I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Crow ; I don't like it. Some women would say I ought to be violently

offended, but I just tell you I don't like it. You shouldn't talk about yourself the way you do, and still less about Leo. If there's anything to know about him, I imagine I know it.'

'Oh, very well. Let's change the subject.'

Scheiner walked briskly about the room, fitted his hat on carefully before a glass, raised his chin and adjusted his tie—a smart rosy-crimson silk tie passed through a ring—put his gloves on, spent some time looking for his stick, then said :

'Now I haven't a moment to lose. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye.'

When Scheiner had got as far as the door, he turned back again, saying :

'Oh, look here, Kitty, there are those Scanlans ; I want them. They are extremely wealthy, and fond of amusement. I should think they would be perfectly delighted to be in this swim. You might remember it, if you see them. The man is a simple, boyish, amiable creature enough, and the

sister is rather sentimental, and patriotic, and subversive of that solemn absurdity—the British Constitution.’

‘You seem to be pretty well posted on her sentiments,’ replied Kitty sullenly, with a deeper tone in her voice.

Leo suddenly turned on her with a certain air of viperish ferocity which would have surprised the numerous people who were fascinated by his expression of innocent mirth and good-nature.

‘Attend!’ he said; ‘this is business. There is no occasion for worrying yourself, or me, either. Don’t you be a fool and upset my arrangements. See?’

‘Very well, Leo, I’ll help you. You needn’t doubt that; but if you are treacherous to me—of course I know you don’t entertain the smallest desire to be—still, gare à toi.’

‘Well, that’s enough melodrama for one afternoon. Good-bye. There, you’re not angry with me, Kitty, are you?’ he added, changing instantly back into the insinuating, plausible mixture of merry child and fawning

pet animal. He was like that. Give him his own way, and he was the purring, fawning, gambolling kitten. Oppose him, and he became the glaring wild-cat, all claws. Kitty kissed him, sighed just once, and said :

‘No, dear, it’s impossible to be angry with you. Don’t get lost or run over, and come back in time for dinner.’

At last he really went, after a little further conversation and two or three false starts. His wife walked about the room awhile, stood in the balcony for a minute and looked at the sea, changed her tea-gown for a walking-dress, then sat in her big rocking-chair near the window and read a book. Towards half-past three the waiter brought in a card bearing the name of Mr. John Smalley, of Brick Court, Temple, E.C., who was accordingly shown in. Kitty got up, saying :

‘Why, how do you do, Mr. Smalley? How good of you to come!’

To which Johnny replied :

‘I beg your pardon, I thought Mr. Scheiner would be in.’

Johnny had seen him on the road outside, and successfully 'dodged' him ; still, one must say something.

' Well, I'm in, and very pleased to receive you. If you can put up with that, there is no occasion for you to apologize. Won't you sit down ?

' Thanks.'

Johnny looked at the self-possessed, lazy little lady, gently swaying in her rocker, and then at the book which she had laid down on the little table near her, where the coffee-cup and liqueur-glass yet remained. She, reading his face like large print, said :

' Yes ; you think me "shocking," don't you ? So I am, I imagine, from the Redcliff point of view.'

' I'm not shocked. No fear. The neighbourhood as a whole are invariably horrified at anything they are not accustomed to—good, bad, or indifferent ; but they would make allowances for you, I should say, because you are an American, more or less.'

‘How nice of them! Let us hope they will.’

‘Meaning to say you don’t care a brass farthing what they think, as long as you are enjoying yourself in your own way?’

Kitty Scheiner looked at him, smiled, and silently nodded her head two or three times. Johnny laughed.

‘I know quite well nature intended me for a *gamine*, a street girl; but Providence interposed, and tried to turn me into a *grande dame de par le monde*. I imagine the result is a compromise. I read “schoking” books, and I take pleasure in making rings when I smoke. Can you make rings?’

‘Only by making awful faces.’

‘I fancy my faces are pretty awful, too. But you will be charitable, won’t you? Don’t think because I have little habits and eccentricities excellent people here would think dreadful I have no real principles, though I am pretty frivolous, I admit.’

‘On the contrary, I sympathize with you. Why on earth shouldn’t you do all the inno-

cent things you find pleasant, and have been brought up to regard as matters of course? Goodness, you don't suppose I share the views of the gabbling old hens here on the limits and principles of human conduct? I only wish people here *were* usually brought up to enjoy their lives in a rational way, without having the shriek of "proper" and "shocking," as you call it, echoing at the least departure from the line of rigid commonplace and dreary custom.'

'You feel that? I am very glad, for I will have at least one friend when they all disapprove of me.'

'You will. But don't imagine that they must necessarily disapprove of you. My dear Mrs. Scheiner, if you went to church with your face blacked they'd forgive you, and say no doubt it was an American or foreign custom, as long as they supposed you to be very rich, whereas they talk about it for a week if I go to church in a straw hat.'

'You know the world, Mr. Smalley, it seems.'

‘Very short experience is enough to give one that elementary knowledge,’ replied the Man of the World.

‘Ah! Well, I am afraid they will not have much opportunity of seeing me in church in any colour or form. Tell me, now we are alone, all about the people here. For as they are to be my neighbours, I ought to know something of them, in order not to commit *manques de tact*, or make unfortunate allusions. I know a little of the world also, you see——’

‘I expect you do,’ said Johnny, with a pleased grin.

‘But I do not know the—what shall I say?—the map of this new and particular world, the English provincial society. You must be my Columbus.’

‘I think I would rather be Vasco di Gama in this case.’

‘Why? Who was he?’

‘Well, didn’t he reach the Cape of Good Hope?’

Mrs. Scheiner leaned her graceful fair head back and laughed.

‘You truly are a delightful boy! Pardon, I should say man; but I am a good deal older than you, *tant pis pour moi*, and it seemed to say itself naturally.’

‘I don’t believe you are half such an antiquity as you make out.’

‘*Tant mieux pour vous*. Continue not to believe so. But to return to our neighbours. There was an old man yesterday afternoon, with hair gray, like oxidized silver, eyebrows black, eyes small, nose unclassified, face wide, mouth comprehensive, dressed in a long black coat, a tall hat, gray trousers, which did not fit, large shoes, and white socks. Who is he?’

‘Old Satterthwaite. Your description is like a photograph.’

‘Oh yes; I am pretty realistic all the way. You, I suppose, are Romanticist, Idealist?’

‘Am I? I don’t know. I think I’m unclassified, like Mr. Satterthwaite’s nose.’

‘ You prefer Gautier to Flaubert, Daudet to Zola, probably ?’

‘ I’ve tried ’em all. Have you ?’

‘ Oh yes ; and a good many more besides, which I shall not tell you the names of. “ Schoking !” And old Satterthwaite, what is he ?’

‘ He is a stiffnecked old ass, but I don’t think there’s any harm in him. He is not what we call a gentleman, you know, but rich, and undoubtedly respectable. He and my governor are unfortunately at loggerheads just now about an acre of grass, but if it weren’t that it would be something else. Satterthwaite leads the Radical party down here, you see, and the governor rather flatters himself he leads the other party, and they’re always having rows. But I believe Satterthwaite is an honest old boy and kind-hearted, though he is narrow-minded and gifted with a temper.’

‘ And there is a Mrs. Satterthwaite ?’

‘ No ; he’s a widower. But there is a youth. He has just come down for the

Long from Oxford. I forget what college he adorns—perhaps he's a Magdalen Demi, for I believe the beast has abilities. He is sort of clever, but conceited, and has a superior manner which rasps. He has a talent for remembering the terminology and tippy catchwords of all sorts of subjects, so as to exhibit an apparent knowledge which is very convincing to those who know nothing. If he had been born a few years sooner he would have been *Æsthetic*, and had long hair, and written washy paganism on rough-edged paper bound in vellum. As it is, he calls himself an Individualist, and yearns to restore the Jacobite Dynasty, and the social peculiarities of that family, and a mass of other rubbish. Only on paper, of course, or in conversation, for in real life he is a most mildly respectable youth, and a pint or two of ale and a good pipe would make him helpless in an hour. But in spirit he is a gay and reckless Cavalier, a kind of pious Agnostic, an audacious Eccentric on the social wheel. He has a pleasant way

of despising everybody and everything, which makes him very popular. He can't really do anything but chatter. He can't box, can't row, can't play—except dominoes. Oh, he's worth knowing, is Willie Satterthwaite.'

'You are strong on sarcasm this afternoon, it seems to me. And what is he like?'

'Small, narrow-chested, with a stoop. Pale, mud-coloured complexion, rather large nose, glasses, long upper front teeth, reddish hair between long and short hanging about. Carefully dressed, a little differently from anyone else. A white rose in his button-hole, as a rule. All his opinions brand-new, and can't hold his tongue about them.'

'A little vain, perhaps?'

'Perhaps! A little. Jane and I call him the Comma Bacillus or the Enclitic Particle.'

'You make me quite long to know him.'

'You would find him great sport, I am sure.'

'That is possible,' said Mrs. Scheiner, with her little confidential smile. 'But

how am I to know him? For his father is *brouillé* with your father, and I am afraid Papa Satterthwaite looks on us as enemies—presumably because my husband has conspicuously taken your side.'

'Yes; that's what the old chap would do. But Willie prides himself on being free from parental prejudices, and opposes "my poor dear father," as he calls him, in everything, and makes him a peg to hang weak scoffs on. His father sends him to Oxford, and gives him a handsome allowance, no doubt, so of course he uses his superior education to make public mirth at his sire's expense. And he would make a point of being friendly with the people the old chap chose to quarrel with. He met me yesterday, and made a point of being friendly to me. William is a daisy.'

'Introduce him to me.'

'Certainly. He wants to know you. Shall I bring him here?'

'Yes. Bring him here. I shall be in-

terested. But stay you : when you bring him, don't abandon me to him entirely.'

'No fear.'

'Now tell me about yourself. You live generally in London ?'

'Yes. You see, I've my work ; I'm supposed to be reading Law. And I haven't a man to speak to here, of my own age, except just in summer, or perhaps at Christmas-time. I can't make a companion of Mr. Paynter, can I ? Ah, perhaps you don't know him yet ?'

'And you have no brother ?'

'Not one. And if I had, he would be away doing something with a Long Vacation or Long Leave, or something of that sort in it. You can't expect any fellow to spend all the year round at Redcliff.'

'Are there no ladies here who would interest you ?'

'Not one. Well, understand I'm speaking of the past—er—at present.'

Mrs. Scheiner inclined her head lazily :

'Thank you. Of course, there is now

also your cousin, the tall young lady with the black hair and the Hamlet plumes.'

'You don't admire her!' observed Johnny, a pleasing but fallacious conviction breaking in upon him that Mrs. Scheiner was jealous. Perhaps she was, Johnny, perhaps she was, but not on your account.

'She has a waist of sixty centimetres, I should imagine?'

'Couldn't tell you without a slate and pencil, but it's twenty-one inches.'

'Ah! That is—that is fifty-four centimetres.'

'You are a perfect calculating machine. I couldn't have done it. Though, that's no compliment.'

'And she told you that?'

'Yes. At least, she told my sister.'

'And you believed it?'

'I should certainly have believed it, without hesitation, if she had merely said so; but the girls measured. However, it is hardly interesting to argue about that,' replied Johnny.

Mrs. Scheiner saw she was going too far in that direction, and replied :

‘ You are chivalrous to defend a lady’s—centimetres—in her absence, and I was unchivalrous to attack them. I hope you will defend me equally in my absence, when ill-natured people attack—not my waist, but my frivolous character.’

‘ I hope so.’

‘ Though, indeed, you know very little about it any way. And what you do know belongs to the “schoking” class.’

‘ Don’t you think I can guess ?’

‘ I am getting afraid of you. You read human nature too much.’

‘ You have nothing to fear ; I am sure of that.’

‘ Ah ! What am I ? How are you going to describe me ? Not to your family, and the ladies—no, I don’t want to know that. But to your friend, your *camarade de collège*, for example ?’

‘ Probably not at all. If I do, you will know it.’

‘How?’

‘Because he will then want to be introduced to you.’

‘Thank you again. That is bright, but evasive.’

The Man of the World was vastly pleased with himself, and said :

‘When shall I see you again, Mrs. Scheiner? Because I must not waste your time any longer; it’s time I was off.’

‘Oh, you are not wasting my time, more than I should by myself. Surely, amusement is not waste of time.’

‘Well, I don’t think so. But I was always taught that it was.’

‘What would you like to do? You are a law student. I suppose that means you are always drinking *bocks*. Will you have some beer? Or shall we have five o’clock tea in the garden?’

‘I think the latter would be preferable, on this occasion, if I may presume to suggest.’

‘Yes; I think so too. I will order it right now.’ And she rose, stretched a little

in an elegant way, a little like a cat, and said, 'Oh, I am lazy!' went out of the room, and shortly reappeared in a hat, a large black French hat with yellow roses, holding in her hand a scarlet sunshade and a pair of gloves. Then, as she put on the gloves, she said: 'We might walk about the garden for a little time. I shall get stout if I keep not taking any exercise. Do you want to come? I'm ready.'

She was standing near Johnny now, and whisking round in different directions to catch every possible view of herself in the various looking-glasses, and there were wafted to him whiffs of some strange and subtle perfume, one of those scents which come back years afterwards, and bring us those sudden sweet and bitter recollections which nothing else can—not even a song of Zion in a strange land. She was a queerly mixed character, this Kitty Scheiner, this *gamine-grande-dame*. She was clever and silly at the same time. She was fooling pleasantly with this pretty boy Johnny; she

was merry as a child and vain as a peacock ; and yet she would do or suffer anything, were it called for, for the sake of that miserable Leo, who only stuck to her because he could utilize her, and out of a kind of shallow mixture of vanity and sensuality he probably called love. There may be some men charitable enough to say that she was 'ower bad for blessing and ower gude for banning, like Rob Roy.'

So she went into the garden, not for the imbecile purpose chronicled by Mr. Foote, but to further accomplish the subjugation of Johnny, a proceeding which she found pleasant as well as politic. She had begun the treatment on purely utilitarian principles, simply because her husband had hinted that it was desirable to become popular with the gentlemen of the neighbourhood, with the aim of getting them well under control, and this was suggested as her proper share of the work ; but as the process went on, she began to get really interested and amused, and played with him (to use a good old simile)

much as a cat does with a mouse, alternating calm superiority with admiring interest, flattering him into the notion that he was a man of the world, then suddenly, by some question or allusion, making him feel a very small and green boy indeed.

By the time they had taken afternoon tea under a veranda, and been duly stared at by the wedding-tourists, and others who hovered occupationless and full of chatter, she felt convinced that Johnny would remember her, make comparisons with the young women in the neighbourhood to her advantage, and find an early opportunity (in which she would not balk him) of seeing her again, when his fetters might be more firmly riveted. Johnny stayed until it was high time for him to speed home to dinner, and then promised to come again soon, and perhaps bring young Satterthwaite to divert his enslaver. When he had gone, she took a comprehensive glance at the wedding-tourists, expressive of supreme indifference, and walked out under her scarlet sunshade

to the esplanade, where she jetted slowly up and down, soon to be joined by Scheiner and Mr. Paynter.

The brides disliked Mrs. Scheiner with singular unanimity, the bridegrooms carefully forebore from any comment on her, except the most elaborately indifferent kind, while the Americans said her frocks were quite sweet.

Mr. Paynter was asked to dinner, then apologized to sweetly by Mrs. Scheiner, who had no idea he was a married man, and assured him she never would have guessed it, so that poor old Paynter felt vaguely flattered, and decided to get his wife to call. In the meantime, Kitty showed herself off on the esplanade to Paynter, and to the gazing universe, and was charming to look at and to listen to, with her sudden whisks round, fragrant wafts, and bewildering impulses.

‘My eye!’ murmured Paynter as he went home to his wife, ‘there’s something uncommon spicy about that party—uncommon.’

CHAPTER XVI.

OUR friend the dingy Odysseus, the dilapidated seafarer, the longshore loafer and performer of odd jobs, among which the most skilful was the art of obtaining refreshment at the expense of others, had become by use and habit already a recognised and common object of the seashore. He had dropped into the ways of the other fishermen, boatmen, amphibious labourers and miscellaneous hangers-on of marine existence, who are just as numerous and lead as unaccounted-for lives as the miscellaneous hangers-on of sporting or theatrical life, in another way. He talked their talk, which was mostly of weather; he exchanged anecdotes, partly about boats, but chiefly about weather, in its

exceptional manifestations, also various ports, with their approaches, tides, banks, shingles, owers, spits and currents ; and lived their life, which was a mixture of the fishing, digging, shooting (early in the morning with old-fashioned long single-barrelled percussion guns), lounging, 'jobs' of different kinds, on sea and shore, thinly disguised begging, small-scale smuggling, in which yachts were usually instrumental, and in the evenings comfortable, quiet, gossipy, long-winded talking in the ancient tap-room of the Sloop, over tobacco, beer, and rum. This old person, known to men as Isaac Barton, more familiarly as Hisick (all these men seemed to have nothing but Christian names—all were Jarge, Hisick, Bill, Sam, David, Oulie, Dan'l and Jeremiah, at all times ; if there were two Jarges, one was Jarge *per se*, and the other Bigfoot, or Crosseyes, or Spotty Jarge, as if a Red Indian chief), also as Alwoight ('Isle of Wight') Hisick to distinguish him from a native namesake, showed certain differences, however, from his companions at the Sloop.

Though unable to read and write, accomplishments which the younger Jarges and Bills at least could make elementary shift on occasion to display, and as coarse and uncultured in his dialect as they were, his experiences seemed to have a wider range, and his talk a less limited vocabulary. In fact, he knew of a larger and more varied world than they. They knew the coast, the neighbouring seaports, perhaps had been as far as Cherbourg or Corunna once or twice, in yacht or cattle-boat; but of the great oceans and what lay beyond them they knew but little, a name or two and no more, except, perhaps, old David (whose other name was Pearce), who was the Nestor of the Sloop camp, and had been in the Royal Navy, and visited the China and American stations in his time, and was supposed to be of immense age, wisdom and experience. Old David (so distinguished from Young David, a bearded father of an adult family, with a boat of his own) would say :

‘ Ah, I minds the time when there wasn’t

no railways and no steamers, 'fore Parson Gilchrist come yer, that was, though him and me be near of a hage, and the coaches used to go up and down 'tween Bolderminster and Parchm'th, and I minds the big three-deck ships, all sails and no steam, going out a Parchm'th Abber to Spitted, with the sun a-shinin' on ther taps'ls, and the Lines, and the Sallyport. Most o' that 'd be before your time, Alwoight Hisick, I specs, though you be gettin' hold, too.'

'Aye, aye, I be gettin' meddlin' hold, too.'

And then Isle of Wight Isaac would discourse of West Indies, of Southern America, and of 'pleasant isles of Aves beyond the Spanish Main,' and seductive potions in which lemons and pineapples were soaked in rum, and served by 'mewlatters' and 'yeller gals,' in a manner which displayed Isaac's morals in a deplorable light, and highly edified and entertained the younger men, while Old David nodded and grinned senile appreciation. Sometimes his reminiscences would merge from the loosely-luxurious to

the sanguinary and sombre, in some semi-civilized Spanish - American realm, where Negroes, Indians, Spaniards, Mestizos, knives, pistols, blood, and lurid firelight on still midnight waters would be the ingredients. And the young men listened with open eyes, and treated their Odysseus to three penn'orth o' rum at the conclusion.

Old Isaac had acquired a habitation, an appropriate lair, whence he could watch the sunlit waters smile, and see the misty squall approach, and the white chalk patch near the top of the red brown cliff grow livid against the leaden thunderclouds, whence he could criticise each brig, barque, barquantine, top-sail schooner, cutter, yawl, wherry, ketch or smack which came into view; whence, by walking a step or two, he could even see with his piercing dark mariner's eyes the shore of the bay, and grin sardonically at artillerymen from Fort Romer in dark serge trousers with red stripes, gray flannel shirts and Austrian caps, as they dragged by main force, with shoutings and free perspiration, in the most

difficult and unnautical way possible, a large white boat into the water, loaded it with two casks set on square wooden frames and adorned with red flags, scrambled in, and paddled away to drop a cask overboard, which was then bombarded at sketchy ranges by the other artillerymen in the fort, one of whom would be darkly outlined against the sky frantically wagging a blue and white flag to the boat's crew, who usually appeared to bring their blind eye to bear on the signals.

This lair, den, cabin, resort, burrow or abiding-place was a small and ancient stone cottage with a thatched roof in a ruined and tumble-down condition, and akin to a sty in general design, situated in a shallow saucer-like depression on the summit of the down away beyond Fort Romer, and overlooking the (comparative) valley where the remains of Roylieu Abbey stood. This cottage was exposed to all the winds of heaven, perfectly lonely, and barely visible unless one were very close to it, owing to the aforesaid depression, which

nearly concealed it, though it did not shelter it to any appreciable extent. It belonged, as has been implied, to Mr. Smalley, and had been for a long time the residence of a poor old woman, who had died some year or two before. She had the reputation of having been a wrecker a long time ago, and of exhibiting false lights from that lonely eminence, of dealing with spirits and other matters customary for foolish tongues to attribute to poor old women in such situations. She lived upon very little—gin principally, and a trifle from time to time from the old Rector, who would sit and have long conversations with her about the past they both remembered, and sometimes a man would give her a fish, or an armful of broken timber for the fire. When she died, the cottage was in very bad repair, the roof was falling in, and the inside walls and stone floors were black with smoke and dirt. The few objects of furniture, being valueless, were charitably distributed by the owner of the cottage, and no one seemed the least likely to offer himself as a tenant for

such an undesirable little hovel, in such an exposed and out-of-the-way situation.

The hovel was, however, far from unattractive to the eye from outside, especially if the eye had any appreciation of the beauty of colour or the charm of decay. The old gray stones of the walls were covered with orange lichen, and from their weathered surfaces peeped curly little bleached fossils, while the thatched roof was perforated and infested with birds' nests—old and new—and patched with little growths of plush moss, and over all climbed the wild rose and clustered the ivy and Virginian vine. The grass grew long and luxuriant at the bottom of the walls, and none the less so because of the emptying on it of household sewage by generations of simple people who lived without the knowledge of D traps or sinks, and without the fear of the inspector before them.

Perhaps an enthusiastic imagination could go so far as to think it cosy inside as well, that cosiness which a small interior, thick

walls, and warm roof suggest in a bleak situation. Cosy to a degree it became, but not till the ingenious Isaac, the Wandering Islander, the lowly Polymetis, had conveyed (the wise it call) stones from Roylieu ruins and repaired the crazy walls; timber and planks from the shore, from garden-fences, cowsheds and the like, and repaired the roof, and made shelves, a table, a stool, and (oh no, not a bookcase) a bedstead; not till he had pulled straw from the rear of laden waggons, and picked it from unwatched farmyards and dungheaps, and repaired the thatch, pegging it down with fresh sharp hazels cut from the Lord of the Manor's woods. The only penates or teraphim Isaac from the Isle of Wight did not actually steal in a leisurely way of a fine night were a mattress, and a plate or two, and some tumblers. Those he bought gradually. When he had completed his furnishing, the place really began to look cosy, though he certainly had not made it look clean, cleaning or washing either himself or anything else

being to him a new-fangled nuisance and a dangerous deceit.

He cooked his own food, which was seldom of an attractive character or appearance, boiled tea in a tin can in the morning, and at eleven served himself with grog regularly, from a bottle of rum which he carried down to the Sloop to be replenished when required. At twelve he consumed food again, with the aid of a pocket-knife; forks he despised as a frivolous luxury. In the afternoon in fine weather he dozed outside the door on his stool, with his back to the wall, a black clay pipe in his mouth, and his tall hat on. In cold weather or rainy he dozed indoors on his stool, with his back to the wall, a black clay pipe in his mouth, and his tall hat on. At various times in the day he chewed tobacco on the shore, and passed the remark that the wind was going round, or backing to the nor'rad, and the evening seldom failed to find him in the taproom of the Sloop, where he took pieces of cheese or a cold onion with his clasp knife, and consumed further rum.

At night he walked up the down, along the white road, took a footpath to the right from it which led between gorse bushes (against which he occasionally lurched with prickling and blasphemy), past the top of the stone quarry to the summit, where his residence stood.

Gardening he had no interest in, though he admitted a pig might come in handy if he could manage to find one willing to associate with him. Probably the obstacle was that a pig is a difficult thing to steal noiselessly. He did not receive visitors as a rule. The old lady, his predecessor, had been of the description generally called hag, and was feared rather than loved, and he kept up and enjoyed the style and title as far as a male might. The old Rector, however, came to see him, and made him a present of a wooden armchair, but failed to impress him with much sense of his shortcomings as a member of a civilized community. However, he asserted himself to be a true blue supporter of the Established Church, with unnecessarily

gross, not to say profane, emphasis ; though, as the Rector observed, his support was wholly external, like that of a buttress. It happened that the owner of the cottage, Mr. Smalley, did not, at the time of the hag's decease, in the least know what to do with it, and was overjoyed, though displaying outward pompous reluctance, when the old man offered to become his tenant. So that Johnny and Jane were interested to find that the old smuggler, or pirate, or nondescript marine vagabond who had accosted them one day, and never failed to greet them since, calling him 'Capting' and her 'my prittee,' had become, so to speak, a retainer on their estate.

Johnny gave him tobacco sometimes, and Jane beguiled him into conversation, in the course of which, I think, he told some of the most appalling lies on record in the way of adventures, piratical and smuggling, which gave great satisfaction, and may have been a source of increment to his income assuredly not unearned. For if we who write stories

expect to be paid for them (and go on expecting a fairly long time, some of us), why may not our Islander be paid for telling of the men and the cities, the sufferings of the sea, and the twistings of his slippery life-thread among all the dangers he had (or had not) known? The island was not Ithaca, for which he may at times have felt home-sick dreams, when soothed by the tawny Calypso of some southern Ogygia, but it was the Wight, whence not one, not a dozen, not a hundred, will number those who have sailed the distant seas, and passed along the restless roadways that led to Britain's fame, and done the deeds which kept up Britain's name; though some were humble, and some were sinful (as persons are sometimes known to be even among those who do not proceed from that Fortunate Isle, that pleasant outpost of the Narrow Seas), and some sank and wallowed in the swinery of aromatic Circean isles, in days and latitudes in which discipline and energies became equally lax. He spoke not of charred poles and Polyphemus

of the single eye, but he dealt largely with knives and livers, Spanish, Portygee, African and American.

He had herded no flocks of Helios; but he spoke with satisfaction of herding slaves with a cowhide, and he knew of some curious things which occurred in the Kingdom of Guatemala, between the Pacific and the Caribbean Sea, in the days when the crown of that kingdom was broken, and the pieces became the dignified and edifying republics of San Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, etc., etc. He also spoke with much relish of the 'carryings-on' in that mysterious and awful Black Republic, where the ridiculous superficial apery of French civilization combines with the relaxed black barbarism of quite other African apery to make a very strange result indeed, highly creditable to the being ironically described as a man and a brother. From these hints it may be imagined that the old Isle-of-Wighter was one whom Jane and Johnny listened to with eager ears, and 'pumped' until the pump signified

that it was 'meddlin' dry,' which was not seldom.

Well, it came to pass one evening late in July, or early in August, on the same day as the matters related of in the last chapter, that Johnny Smalley and Dick Scanlan strolled down as far as the shore, to enjoy their after-dinner smoke out of doors.

In the weather then prevailing, it seemed desirable that as much of life as possible should be spent out of doors. The sun had just gone down somewhere out of sight behind the green, angular shoulders of the Romer Fort, and the latter had duly hauled down its flag and bid the sun farewell with a single solemn bang, which went shuddering through the hills and woke the sleeping echoes in the twilight valleys, and informed the birds of bed-time. Along the little stone and concrete esplanade, built high above the shore, but, nevertheless, battered and smashed down in the winter by the waves that now lapped its base softly and sleepily like infant tigers' tongues, whose very love scathes, the

coastguard on duty walked up and down, pausing at intervals to use his long glass. With him the two young men exchanged a greeting. It then occurred to Johnny to suggest :

‘Come into the Sloop for a few minutes, and see if my Ancient Mariner is on shore. I think you’ll admire the old ruffian. He’s wonderfully weird and uncanny, and gives me the idea that he has done something. I don’t know what, but I’ve no doubt he’s done it.’

‘Shot an albatross, maybe, or a landlord.’

‘Nothing half so harmless a piece of sport, I should say. I have a notion he’s been a good old manslayer in his time, and not particular as to how. I dare say half his yarns are of an allegorical character ; but there is something about him which suggests a reserve of real adventure, a ball of unrolled yarns, so to say, which would make quiet people sit up, and children quake in bed. You haven’t been in the Sloop yet, have you ?’

‘I have not. It seems months since I was inside a decent pub. I’ve nearly forgotten the taste of four ale.’

‘Well, here we are ; let’s sample it. It’s a quaint old place.’

And they went in at a low doorway, down one step into a narrow stone-paved passage, and turned to the left, and found themselves in the common room, with an oil-lamp hanging from a black beam overhead, a wide hearth with a smouldering fire on it, just sufficient to light a pipe from, not enough to make the room too hot, and long narrow old tables along the walls, under the window, on the opposite side, and round as far as the door, protected from draught by the high wooden backs and ends, carved into curved profiles, of the benches, or ‘settles,’ which ran along the walls to accommodate those who sat at the tables. The floor was covered with sand, and the small lattice windows were open. A door in a corner opposite the entrance led down a few steps to a mysterious stone-paved cavernous room which contained

casks, a copper, bottles, lamps, bits of rope and timber, a ladder, tools, and various stores, exhaling a maritime and hammy aroma. Through this door came and went Mr. Bolt, the landlord, from time to time, a silent man with a brown beard and an old glazed hat, in shirt sleeves, bearing yellow and brown earthenware pots of beer. A tall eight-day clock ticked away time in a slow way in a corner.

The company who sat at the tables with these pots before them, their hats upon their heads, and clay pipes in their mouths, talked in a slow, deep, deliberate way, as if life contained plenty of leisure, and moments were to be fully and calmly enjoyed. And in the growing obscurity of the evening they made quite a Rembrandt picture under the single yellow-flamed paraffin-lamp. There were present Mr. Blow, proprietor of several boats and a cutter yacht, with a grizzled red beard and blue clothes ; five or six agricultural boatmen, who dug potatoes in blue guernseys and nautical caps, and pulled oars

or put helms down in corduroy trousers and hobnailed boots ; a coastguard off duty, with a neatly trimmed black beard and a mild expression ; Mr. Ballard, Chief Officer of the same service, in blue and brass buttons ; a grizzly-bearded veteran with a vulture nose and a saturnine temperament, Willum Erbert, a village idiot who flattered himself he was a carpenter, and smiled with exasperating persistency ; and lastly Hisick of the Alwoight, in the best corner between the window and the hearth, spitting at intervals, and enjoying a glass of rum in a leisurely way.

All present greeted Johnny respectfully, and included his friend in the greeting. They had most of them known Johnny from boyhood. He and Dick sat down, and Mr. Bolt brought them beer. Mr. Blow was saying :

‘ I wants ’nothur man fur to make up crew fur t’ *Curlew*. ’

Someone said :

‘ *Curlew* got a job ? ’

' Ah, she 'ave.'

' 'Ave she, now ?'

' She 'ave so.'

' Oo be a-takin' of her out this time ?'

' Scheiner—'im at the 'otel. 'Ee be a-takin' of her for two month. Ah, and I 'lowed to get John 'Enery, but John 'Enery 'ee 'ave got a berth longa wold Satterthwaite, in the gar'nin' line, 'ee 'ave.'

' 'Ave 'ee now ? Well, I year'd summat 'bout that ere.'

' Can't you come, Jarge ?'

This to a tall youth with a small round face covered with irregular growths of brown fluff.

' Not me. Not yattin'. I be gwine 'arvestin' t'marra.'

' Ah, 'arvestin' be ye ?'

' I be. Down 'long Spanner's.'

' Ah, it'll be rare fine weather fur they 'arvesters. Wind be gone round nar'-east just afore sunset.'

' East-nar'-east,' interpolated Chief Officer Ballard with gloomy correctness.

‘ I ’lowed this afternoon we’d ’ave some hrain, but the wind ee’ve shifted,’ said Mr. Blow.

‘ Ah, don’t want no hrain now!’ said Jarge.

Then the old man in the corner spat and broke his silence :

‘ You wants a man, do you ?’

‘ Ah, I do,’ replied Mr. Blow.

‘ Wot’s the cruise? Sets out in the first vi’lent callun wot rises, and reefs all close. That’s wot that Portygee nobleman’s notion of a vy’ge is. You wants a man—take me.’

‘ Take you, Alwoight Hisick? Well, I dunno. Wot good are you? I’ve seed you pull a row-boat, but any baby can do that. ’Ow do I know you knows the differ ’twixt a jib and a mains’l, let alone gittin’ so full of rum you’d fall overboard?’

The old man replied without anger, but with a scathing scorn in his dark eyes, under prominent gray hairy brows and a wrinkling bald head, which, with his Roman nose, projecting underlip, and hairy chin and neck,

gave him the appearance of St. Peter in Leonardo da Vinci's 'Last Supper,' if St. Peter can be imagined with dark-yellow tobacco-juice at each corner of his mouth :

'Look yere, Bill Blow, 'ow hold be you ?'

'I be sixty-one.'

'Ah, and you look every day of it. Well, now, I bain't so very much holder nor you neither, not to call hold, but I've knowed more 'bout all manner of ships and boats before you was born than you will know till you're buried and forgot. Willum Erbert, if you keeps on a-smiling like that 'ere, I shall have to twist your 'ed round backside far-most, and you can smile at the bloomin' wall.'

'Ah, don't go on at Willum Erbert,' remonstrated someone ; 'he's 'aff silly, we all know.'

Willum Erbert did not seem to appreciate the style of his apologist, and ceased to smile, also looking in deadly fear in a furtive manner at the grim old ruffian in the corner, who continued :

‘Now, then, Bill Blow, tell me wot’s the soundin’s at ebb in the throat of Parchm’t’h Abber, as you enters, with Block-house a matter a three p’int’s afore yer part beam? Tell me that. That’s a heasy one, that is. You’ve a-bin there later nor wot I ’ave.’

Bill Blow looked a trifle put out, and took refuge in evasion, saying :

‘Garn ! Wot joo know ’bout soundin’ ?’

‘Wot a man ’aves a right to know who’ve hove a dipsey-lead afore you was barn. Well, the answer to that ere riddle be three-quarters of a fathom. Go and look on a chart, or sink the ’ (adjective) ‘lead yerself, and then tell me ’oo knows most about that ’ere.’

‘I say,’ said Johnny, in an undertone to Dick, ‘he’s an entertaining old liar, isn’t he? He’s master of these fellows already, sits in the best corner, lays down the law, and I dare say makes them pay for a good deal of his refreshments. We must draw him for a yarn. I’ll begin by suggesting drinks round.’

‘Leave that to me. I’m the stranger. What’s more, I understand how to get on

with this lot quite as well as you, if not better, *experto crede.*' And Dick said aloud: 'See now, comrades, my cousin Mr. Smalley's brought me here for the first time, and he wants to stand drinks; but I say it's for me to be paying the footing, being the stranger.'

The whole company turned their eyes on the shapely sunburnt face, athletic form, and good-humoured expression of the ex-soldier with what was for them alacrity. The Jarges (there were not quite four of them) grinned. Mr. Blow and Mr. Ballard metaphorically 'rose together'—that is to say, they remained 'covered in their places,' but each considered himself qualified to take seniority or precedence over the other in replying for the crowd; so they replied together, looking reproachfully at each other:

'Thank you kindly, sir, I'm sure.'

The old man in the corner said: .

'You're a gen'leman, you are, sir. I knows a gen'leman when I sees him, wot bein' a gen'leman be'aves *has* a gen'leman.'

And gen'lemen in the good old days gone by always 'ad a drink fur a pore man, and a cuss too, in a friendly way. There, I minds the time when old Lard Triangles—Hadmiral Lasher 'ee 'ad a-bin, in command of the '*Ellfire* frigate—'ee'd walk down to P'int to get his galley, and see the boys playin' about, larkin' in the mud, climbin' about the wherries, and what not, and 'ee'd say : " If I 'ad some o' you young blanks aboard of my blank frigate, I'd make you blank well skip out of your blank young skins, blank your blank eyes, I would !" An' then maybe 'ee'd chuck 'em a 'anful o' coppers fur to scramble for. Never meant no 'arm, sir—norrabit ! They loved 'ee.'

(I may say Mr. Barton gave the text of the Admiral's speech in its unexpurgated form.)

' Well, now,' said Dick, ' what are you going to have ?'

They all had beer except our Ancient Mariner, who had his rum as usual, and said, ' We drinks your jolly good 'ealth, sir, and

yours too, Capting,' to Johnny. And the others followed suit. Johnny observed :

'I suppose you've come across people in your time to whom Admiral *Hellfire*, or whatever you called him, was a comparatively mild potentate ?'

'Suckin' dove, sir ! There was Captain John Creery commandin' of the *Aguardiente*, when the Kingdom of Guatemala rose and turned out the Spaniards. The *Aguardiente* was a schooner—tops'l schooner—what 'ad a-bin mercantile, but they putt a battery aboard o' she, of little carronades, with a thirty-two pounder fore and aft, and the crew was creoles and niggers, four Yankees what 'ad escaped gittin' 'ung atome, two Irishmen, and one lively young Isle o' Wighter.'

'Quite so,' said Johnny, nodding.

'Full o' men as she could go, she was packed. And ole John Creery 'ee kep' the niggers at the ship's work, while the others was to do the fightin'. And 'ee maintained discipline, 'ee did, with a long plaited leather whip with fishes' bones worked in crossways.

Very 'andy he used to find that 'ere come in, most times. Well, us come into haction with the Royal Spanish corvette *Assuncion*, and after firin' away like 'ell for awhile, our shot began to run short ; cos why, we always loaded double, d'ye see ? So we rammed down old iron, chain, and rivets, and copper nails and broken bottles, and all manner. Well, one of the niggers got knocked over, and 'is 'ed come off, and I'm jiggered if old John didn't sing out, "Load one o' they guns with that there 'ed." And we did ; and Jack Spaniard 'ad to eat nigger's 'ead that day. An' after we'd boarded the *Assuncion*, I minds we found a lot of sherry, and oranges, and Santa Cruz rum aboard. We mixed that lot together. And when we'd finished that, and 'ad a bit of a lark with the crew of the *Assuncion*—there was a lot of slaves aboard what turned to and lent us a hand at that—and after we'd 'ad a bit of a nap, we putt the hammynition aboard o' the *Aguardiente*, exceptin' a cask of powder we left open in the hold of the *Assuncion*, with a bit taller candle stuck in

'ee, and went with the slaves aboard of our own schooner. Then we putt back to Truxillo for repairs. Fine day that was, with a breeze o' wind a couple o' p'int's to the narrad o' heast.'

'Ah,' said Johnny, 'I'm glad it was a fine day. And what became of the crew of the Spanish ship?'

'Well, sir, if I was to say I know'd, I should be tellin' of a lie to you; but if you was to ast me what I *think*, I should think they was somewhere at the bottom of the Caribbean Sea by this time. Last thing *we* see'd of them they was hup in the air along with bits of their ship.'

'God rest their souls!' said Dick. 'But it's a fine story, nevertheless. What became of the two Irishmen, your comrades you are after speaking of?'

'One got made a general ashore by the Republic of Guatemala.'

'More power!'

'And the other fell overboard while in liquor. Who's this?'

‘This’ was a fresh customer, of comparatively aristocratic mien, being Lady Gooch’s coachman and no less, who said a civil but supercilious ‘good-evening,’ and remarked that the moon was soon going to rise.

‘Here,’ said Johnny to Dick, ‘this is as bad as Littimer. I don’t mind the bright (or dull) eyed mariners, but I can’t stand “minservants.” Let’s go and get one or two of the girls to come for a walk and see the moon rise. I expect it’s the harvest-moon.’

‘I’m with you.’

And they said good-night and left. The hero of the Caribbean Sea also left, and began to ascend the mountainous road towards his isolated and tranquil abode, murmuring the chorus of a corrupted and ill-pronounced Spanish song :

‘Ella es hermosa
Mas no es prudente
He descuidado all the rest,
So pass the aguardiente.’

CHAPTER XVII.

DICK and Johnny walked back up the short steep zigzag by which access was had to the top of the cliff, not far from the edge of which stood Fernbank, or, at any rate, the garden back gate of Fernbank, though the house itself had the front-door and carriage entrance towards a road on the inland and remoter side. In the garden they found Nora and Jane walking up and down, and perchance gossiping, as their voluble conversation came to a dead stop when their respective brothers appeared.

‘You’ve been a long time,’ said Jane.
‘Where have you been?’

‘Where are the others?’ replied Johnny.

‘Lilian’s sitting in the drawing-room read-

ing an article on Bimy-tallism in the *Fortnightly Review*, which she doesn't the least understand, but means to swagger about to other people who haven't tried to. She ordered it at the station bookstall the other day in an audible voice in the vulgar tongue, before as many people as possible.'

'I should have thought it a subject too dreary and incomprehensible for even Lilian to want to read up and jabber about. Where is Hélène?'

'She was here a little while ago, but she has disappeared. I don't know where she is.'

'Then we must even make shift to do without her. We want to go to the top of Romer Hill to see the full moon rise, or just risen, perhaps, on the sea, and thought some of you would like to go. What do you say, Nora?'

'Oh, I will be very pleased. I should think it would be fine. Would you like it?' she added to Jane.

'Rather. Come on; let's go before anybody else turns up.'

Nora asked : ' Can I go like this ?'

' Like this ' was her black - and - white-striped skirt, with a black body, the throat having a V-shaped depression for evening purposes, the black lace scarf round her neck and shoulders, and a dark-blue Tam-o'-Shanter Jane had handed her on going out, which became her marvellously, as she herself, perhaps, surmised.

' Dear me, yes !' said Johnny. ' You'll do very well. It's only out here on the down, and you won't meet anybody. In any case the great thing is not to lose time. Come on, we'll show the way.'

And they went out through the garden gate, and along the edge of the cliff, Jane and Dick following. It was necessary to go downhill nearly to the level of the shore, before ascending the white chalk road up the slope of Romer Down, owing to the physical configuration of the locality ; and the downhill part was steep, so that they naturally descended it with some rapidity, amounting in some places to a sort of jumpy run, which

made conversation for the moment difficult. In point of fact, Johnny, esteeming that saving of time was at present the main object, while the backward journey could be taken with greater leisure and dignity, instead of walking along the zigzag road, led the way down the craggy slope from one section of the zigzag to the next, and Nora, not being a chamois, had to receive a little assistance, though taking a child-like pleasure in the unaccustomed scramble.

When they got to the bottom of the slope, and stopped, laughing, to take breath, Nora said :

‘ And will it all be like that ? ’

‘ Oh no. The rest is all plain sailing. We needn’t go back that way, either. Oh, here are the others. ’

And Dick bounded down into the road like a projectile, very nearly coming on his head.

‘ Hurroo ! It’s difficult to keep your formation over this broken ground. Wait now, Jane ! ’

Jane was standing on the top of the low wall which supported the slope, and kept it from slipping and crumbling into the road when the thaw and frost succeeded one another in winter-time.

‘Give me your hands.’

And Jane put her hands in his, and jumped lightly down.

‘Now let us go soberly,’ said Johnny, and they began to ascend the more gradual slope of Romer Down. It was by this time long past sunset, and of the afterglow all the colour was faded, and there remained only the pale platinoid luminosity over the west, and the golden glow of moonrise almost hidden by the high ground behind them in the east. It was very calm, very silent, save for the rhythmic soft wash of the water on the shingle, and very lonely. The *Curlew* at anchor in the bay showed a light. Johnny observed: ‘I’d no idea how becoming my old cap could be.’

‘Oh, is it yours?’

‘Yes. But you are most welcome to it.’

‘I didn’t know at all. I wanted something, and Jane gave it me. I hope you don’t mind, because I think I would like to keep it.’

‘Do, by all means. You will do it far more justice than I shall.’

‘Do you like me in it?’

‘My dear Paddy, I like *it* on *you*. My esteem and affection for you would be undiminished if you wore a sou’-wester or a cocked hat with a plume of shamrocks.’

‘Johnny, you’re getting remarkably cheeky, and you’re trying to be sarcastic, and you don’t do it well at all.’

‘Perhaps not. Rather more in someone else’s line, isn’t it?’

‘I don’t know what you mean at all.’

‘No? No, you wouldn’t. You’ve never seen the moon rise here yet, on the water, have you?’

‘Not from this hill we’re going up. I saw it from that part of your garden which goes out to the edge of the cliff, on the evening you had a party.’

‘Did you? However did you find out that place? It’s a capital retreat, in its way, but requires finding.’

‘Mr. Cunningham showed it me.’

‘Oh!’

‘Why do you say “Oh” like that?’

‘No reason in the world. Simply as an interjection. Many people say much worse things than that when they interject.’

‘If I weren’t out of breath and it weren’t unladylike, I’d box your ears hard.’

‘Oh, I don’t think so, Paddy; you know you wouldn’t willingly hurt a beetle.’

‘No; I’d get on a chair. But who gave you leave to call me Paddy?’

‘I never supposed you would think it otherwise than complimentary, and you told me they used to call you so, and it struck me as appropriate. I consider it affectionate, respectful, and distinctive.’

‘I consider you an awful tease. See now, where have you been all the afternoon and evening? You appeared at dinner, and said you’d been out, which we all knew, and then

began talking about something else in a hurry.'

'Well, Dick and I have just been spending our time very instructively in hearing an old sailor-man, who is a great friend of mine, tell blood-curdling yarns about the Caribbean Sea. He is a most interesting old male-factor.'

'Yes, but you weren't with Dick this afternoon.'

'No, I was by myself. Alone by myself, as you would say.'

'Out visiting, maybe? And who did you see?'

'I went to see a man who wasn't at home.'

'So you saw a lady who was, instead!'

'Well, perhaps I did. What, then? It was a most ordinary accident, of course; but you've known us long enough now to guess what sort of a jaw there'd be if I let out that I'd been interviewing the fair stranger. Mother would begin by saying, "But why couldn't you *say* you were going to call? I meant to go with your father to-morrow, but now it will

look so ridiculous our going in one after another. Besides, it's hardly the thing for you to go first, as if you were head of the family or more attentive than us," etc., etc. Then there would be all the girls wanting to know exactly what she had on, and what she did, and what she said, and what I said in reply, and then the governor would suddenly put down the *Times*, and say, "Eh? What's all that about?" and have to have it told all over again. No, not me!

Nora smiled, and said :

'Well, you'll tell me, Johnny, won't you, now?'

'Tell you what? I'd tell you anything in the world you could ask me, except one, except one,' replied Johnny, skilfully 'pulling' the question to the 'on' side, in the language of cricket, and, as he expected, causing a change in the style of the bowling.

'And what's that, now?'

'That I'm afraid to say. I'm not as afraid of you as I used to be. You used to have the effect on me of—well, a cathedral, say.

You're still a sphinx, but I find you are human. Still, I think I'll keep that one thing to myself,' pursued Johnny, in the evident desire of being further pressed.

· But I want to know !

· You wouldn't be a bit happier if I told you. Besides, I think you know it already, Paddy !

· I do, do I ?' said she with a furtive smile.

Johnny looked round hurriedly to see that he was not at the moment visible to the others. Then, adopting a tone of suitable tenderness, he said :

· I suppose I shall have to tell you, whether I like it or not.'

Summer night, rising moon, murmuring sea, solitude, Nora Scanlan in immediate proximity, what did the poor boy expect to be able to say except one thing ?

· Please yourself,' said she demurely.

· If I thought you awe-compelling like a cathedral, it must have been one built of loadstone,' began he very fairly.

· But what are they ? I know what toad-

stones are : they're the jools you find in a toad's head.'

This, to continue the cricketing simile, nearly took Johnny's off-stump. But he stood up again :

' Well, never mind, that's another story ! What I really mean is that I'm dreadfully fond of you, dear old Sphinx !'

The Sphinx maintaining a silence which was so far not unpromising, Johnny made so bold as to put an arm round its waist. Such things may happen in such scenes, and be forgiven then and forgotten (?) to-morrow. But no. Nora gently removed it, put it back in its proper place by Johnny's side, and said :

' You mustn't do that !'

' Mustn't I ? No good, really ?'

' Johnny, I like you very much indeed, but not like that. Can't you just go on as you are ?'

' Well, I suppose I must try !' (very tragically for a moment). ' You may depend on my not being disagreeable or different

from usual. You don't think it might get different in time ?'

'You never know. No, I won't tease you. I *don't* think so, really, now. We won't say anything about this, and will be good friends and forget all about it.'

'All right. And you'll let me call you Paddy ?'

'As much as ever you like. But you're not telling me about this lady you went to see.'

Bails flying and stumps prostrate.

'You're a witch, I think.'

'I know a lot about witchcraft. I know everything which is lucky or unlucky. I know what dreams mean, and I can tell fortunes. Do you think her pretty ?'

'Well, candidly, yes.'

'She talked about the people here, and asked you questions about them ?'

'You are evidently a witch. I dare say you can tell me the conversation with the fidelity of a phonograph.'

'Hark !'

They were just passing along that part of the road which skirted the top of the chalk quarry, and both paused and listened.

‘ I don’t hear anything,’ said Johnny.

‘ I thought I heard a voice behind and below us.’

‘ Dick and Jane, no doubt. Now let’s turn to the left, and get nearer the edge of the cliff, and see the sea.’

‘ What are those white stones for ? They go along one after the other in a row in the grass.’

‘ They show the coastguard the way on foggy nights, so as to prevent him walking over the precipice, which is high just here.’

And they walked towards the edge, at the top of the down, as near as was safe—nearer, perhaps—and saw the magnificence of the arisen golden moon on the eastward water, and the cliffs, bay, and fort they had left behind and below them.

‘ There, it was worth the trouble, wasn’t it?’

‘ Indeed it was ; ’tis lovely !’

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As Dick and Jane walked up the chalk road behind the other two, at a discreet distance, the latter said :

‘ And what have you two been doing since dinner ? ’

‘ Oh, you’d never believe it ! ’

‘ If it’s any sort of mischief I should without hesitation. It couldn’t very well be anything heroic on a night like this. You couldn’t have been battling with the elements in a lifeboat, could you ? having volunteered to take the vacant place which the hardest mariner shrank from, despite the untold gold you offered for a volunteer ? You couldn’t have rescued an inanimate lady from a devoted brig, who is now recovering consciousness in a fisherman’s cabin after the administration of such simple remedies as the poor folk knew, and murmuring a few words in an unknown tongue ? ’

‘ No ; I have not been doing anything of that sort. ’

‘ Well, what, then ? ’

‘ I’ve had a pot of beer. ’

‘Like a Grenadier. How paltry!’

‘Well, I *am* a Grenadier—at least, I’m after being one not more than a month since. I’ve been listening to a story.’

‘Not even telling one! You are not a bit enterprising.’

‘Well, then, I’m not, and that’s quite true. I’m just the slowest person alive. I’m not industrious, I only did my duty as a man is bound to do in the Servuss; I’m not clever like your brother or his friend Cunningham, but I can be useful in a way about a place, and I can keep people in order a bit; and I’ll do for you to laugh at sometimes.’

Dick said all this in a way which was meant to be jocular, but there was something in the tone of his voice which went straight to the deepest hidden throne of Jane’s sympathies, and made her reply:

‘I won’t have you talk like that! It isn’t true a bit! You *are* clever. You can do things, and have seen things that none of the men here know anything about. It’s non-

sense to talk the way you're doing; and if you really meant it—well, you ought not to. I don't care if Johnny *does* know a little more Latin and Greek than you. He is only a boy, though he is a nice boy; but you're a man, and we all like you very much: do you hear?

The big ex-sergeant looked at the little girl who walked beside him with her hands in the pockets of her loose serge 'reefer' jacket (she was only 'little' in the comparative degree, being not so very far from 'out' and the average size for her age), and replied:

'I hear. Your words are like rain in the Bayuda Desert. Don't think I mind you laughing at me. You can say or do anything you like to me, for I know it's all in the way of kindness.'

'Well, you know I like talking, and I talk a lot of nonsense. Besides, Frowlein will be back before long, and I'll have to start North German, and French acquired in Paris, and highly certificated algebra, and life will be a

burden, so I like to have all the fun I can now.'

'More power! And by-and-by you'll be a grand lady, with all the accomplishments, and then you won't be sorry for the time you've spent in learning. There, Father Doyle taught me to talk Latin once, only it's one of the things you forget easy. Jane, I wish you'd teach me some of the things you learn.'

'Me? I'm as ignorant as the ground! I don't really remember anything, except the novels I read. You'd better spoon Frowlein when she comes, and she'll load you up with all the learning of the Egyptians.'

'There, now, that's an idea! What is she like?'

'She's a perfect fiend—the Hag Duessa. If you really do admire her I'll never forgive you.'

Frowlein was a really blameless person with a square head, much sense of duty and none of humour.

'All right. Is it much further we have to go?'

‘No. Are you tired? Do you want me to help you?’

‘Oh, I can manage a few steps further. Johnny and Nora have gone ahead and disappeared.’

‘They are all right. I know where Johnny’s going, and it doesn’t the least matter if we look at the moon from a different place.’

They were now just ascending that part of the road which skirted the top of the quarry, and both stopped simultaneously, to listen to a voice that seemed to come from below.

‘What’s that?’ said Dick.

Jane listened, kneeling down. After a few moments of dead silence, broken only by the murmuring wash of the sea far below, the voice came again. Jane said :

‘It’s down the stone-pit. I can’t quite catch all he says, but I heard the words “blasted liver.” Why should anyone talk at ten o’clock at night about liver, down there?’

‘Why, he’s fallen over, and can’t get up—

damaged, most likely. See now, you run and fetch the others. Maybe I'll want Johnny's help here. I'll go down and have a look.'

'Oh, but it's so awfully dark down there, Dick!' replied she with a shudder. 'Do take care!'

'The darkness won't hurt me. I'll run down the hill and get into the pit at the bottom. You go and do what I tell you,' replied Dick, promptly taking the command.

'Yes, Dick.' And Jane ran off like Atalanta.

Dick went down and groped his way over lumps of stone in the darkness to the voice. When he got to the place where the owner of the voice lay, he struck a match and recognised the features of Isle of Wight Isaac, who, from his conversation, seemed in great discomfort and a very bad temper.

'What's the matter now?' said Dick.

The old man's reply, denuded of picturesque emphasis and epithets, was that he was walking towards his home, on the top of the hill, when someone pushed him overboard.

‘And what’s the damage?’

‘This yer.’

‘This yer,’ on examination, turned out to be a broken collar-bone. Dick arranged it with his handkerchief in the manner directed by the Ambulance Lectures on First Aid, and said :

‘And why didn’t you get up and go home, or go to the doctor? Your legs are sound enough, and you’re not one to mind a bit of knocking about, I’ll go bail.’

‘My legs bain’t broke, but there was a lot too much rum in ’em for me to start off for another walk. ’Appen I might a-come down yer agen ’fore I made my moorins.’

‘Well, maybe there’s some force in that. Any way, you’ve got to walk home now. We’ll help you. Stand up now, and hang on to me if you feel groggy.’

Here the voice of Johnny was heard at the top, hailing, and soon afterwards he came into the stone-pit by the same way as Dick, and between them they marched the old man up the down till they were in the road again.

Jane and Nora looked at the victim of the accident or assault with much pity, mixed with a little shrinking, for his language at intervals on the way up the side of the down showed anything but a patient acquiescence in such chastenings as might be sent him, and, becoming more and more audible, signalled his approach like an invoice.

‘Where does he live?’ asked Dick.

Johnny answered :

‘Up at the top of the down, in our cottage. Straight on a little way, then a path to the right, just beyond this stone arrangement. By Jingo ! my friend, you’re lucky not to have come off worse.’

The old man, who was sitting on the grass, which rose a little above the level of the road on each side, said :

‘Shook me up a bit, too. Not so bad as I’ll shake ’ee up which done it, though.’

‘Do you mean to say somebody pushed you over?’ said Jane.

‘Yes, my pretty, somebody done that.’

‘Who ? We know everybody about here,

I think, and papa is a magistrate. It's awful to have these things happening almost on our own property, and to our own tenant. Who did it ?

'It was dark, d'ye see. And 'ooever it was pushed me, done it from be'ind, or I'd a-see'd 'ee went over fust, if there bin any chanst give me. "Arter you, sir," I'dersay'd.'

'Are you quite sure it mayn't all have been an accident, due to—well, to put it plainly, to rum ?' pursued Johnny, assuming a legal demeanour.

It was a curious scene—the two young men and their sisters standing on the chalk road in the rising moonlight, high up on the lonely downs, and the queer old man sitting by the roadside, with his arm slung in a dark-blue silk handkerchief, in curious contrast to his sordid apparel.

'No, Capting, it weren't. I may a' bin 'arf-seas over, but I knew my way, and I walked straight between they fuzz-bushes without a scratch.'

‘Do you know of anybody who would be likely to want to do it?’

‘’Appen I might, or ’appen I mightn’t. Man like me mighter made a few enemies ’bout the world, time and again, but I didn’t catch ar sight a ’ee, ye see.’

‘Well, it’s deuced queer. That’s all I can say.’

‘It’s getting late,’ said Dick. ‘Johnny, you go down into the town and get a doctor. You know where to find one better than I do. I’ll take him home and look after him. Girls, you’d better be getting home with Johnny.’

‘I shall stop with you and help,’ said Jane; ‘girls can be useful too, sometimes. I shall go on and put things ready in the cottage.’

‘And I will stay with Jane,’ said Nora.

‘Won’t there be a row at home?’ asked Dick.

‘Not under the exceptional circumstances,’ said Johnny. ‘I’ll explain things as soon as I can.’

And he sped off down the hill.

‘Now then!’ said Dick. ‘You know the way, Jane?’

‘Oh yes! I know all the ways about here.’

‘Then, you advance guard can go on ahead. Come on, comrade, I’ll see you home.’

‘Gorramighty bless you, sir! And the young ladies, too. I bain’t what they calls a good man—’ymns and that—never shall be, and never ’ave a-bin, an’ I dunno as ’ow my blessin’s much more good than my cussin’; but you’re all welcome to it; and if there be any ’eaven, I ’opes you’ll all go there, and ’ave lashin’s a rum and smooth water for ever and ever amen.’

‘Thank you.’

‘’Oo be you, sir?’

‘My name’s Dick Scanlan. I’m young Mr. Smalley’s cousin.’

‘And the young lady—’er as is with Miss Jane?’

‘My sister.’

‘You be soldier, bain’t ye?’

‘I was.’

‘Hirishman too, mebbe?’

‘I am.’

‘Ah!’

It did not take more than a few minutes to cover the ground lying between them and the old man’s hermitage, where they found that Nora and Jane had lit a candle, and made a small fire, on which some water was being boiled in a saucepan. The saucepan and the tin, in which were dregs of cold tea, were the only vessels which would stand fire. There was no kettle.

‘We had a good deal of trouble to find any water,’ said Jane, ‘until we found a barrel outside under the corner of the roof. I don’t think it’s very nice water. And we can’t find any soap at all, or a basin. The bed’s made, so far as you can make it.’

‘All right,’ said Dick. ‘Now, you clear out, and I’ll make him go to bed, and brew something hot for him to take, just to fill up the time till the doctor comes.’

‘Very well,’ said Jane. ‘Good-night.’

‘ Good-night,’ said Nora.

‘ Good-night, my pretties, and Gorramighty bless ye !’

‘ We’ll bring you something to-morrow,’ said Jane, ‘ and you can tell us some more stories.’

‘ I will, my beauties, I will ! I’ll tell you a story some day what’ll make your blood run backwards and turn to hice.’

When they got outside, Jane said :

‘ Oh, Nora ! What an awful little den, isn’t it ? And in such a piggish state, too !’

‘ Indeed, many people in Ireland are glad to live in worse.’

‘ Well, I’m sorry for them. I say, we really must make it decent for him to-morrow. I must make a list of the things he wants.’

‘ Tobacco,’ said Nora, ‘ first. Dick will get that. It’s black and solid and sticky, like blocks of wedding-cake. He’ll be wanting a deal of tobacco if he’s going to be laid up for a bit.’

‘ Oh, but I mean things for the house. A basin or tub of some sort, a bar of yellow

soap. I'm afraid "Matchless for the complexion" would be thrown away on him. A kettle and teapot; some towels of some kind; some meat-jelly in tins to make soup—doctors always order stuff in tins to make soup—one-ox-to-the-teaspoonful sort of thing.'

'And a bottle of rum. The one on the shelf was nearly empty.'

'Yeo, ho, ho! and a bottle of rum. We must see what the doctor says about that. Here they come, Johnny and Dr. Wheeler.'

Dr. Wheeler was an obese elderly man with a large family and a 'general practice.' It was he who had indirectly founded the Redcliff Spa, through the geological wanderings of his *locum tenens*. As he came up towards the top of the down he blew hard, and wiped his head.

'Very warm night. Good-evening, young ladies! Go on! Be off! be off! No business here. Ought to be in bed. Beauty-sleep. H'm!'

Dr. Wheeler had an abrupt manner, verging on ferocity, which nobody was the least

deceived by, as he was known to be a mild, good-natured man in reality, though given to speaking on impulse.

Jane said 'How do you do?' in a 'society' manner, and took no notice whatever of his dismissal, saying: 'Johnny, when you have taken Dr. Wheeler to the cottage you can come down here to us; we'll all sit here and wait for Dick and the medical report.'

'Oh, will we? All right, I don't mind.'

When the doctor came back, he said that the old man would do very well, only he must keep quiet for a bit, because people cannot afford to play tricks at his time of life. 'Queer thing! Pushed over the edge. Murder! Disgraceful! Empty the hotel. Drive visitors away. Everybody ruined, bankrupt. Starve. There, not dead this time. H'm! Goo'-bye!' And he rushed down the hill with a small black bag.

'It's a queer job,' observed Dick to Johnny. 'Do you believe he was pushed over?'

'Not a bit. He saw a bogey, the joint

creation of conscience and rum. Who is there to do it ?

‘ Oh, it’s an Agrarian Outrage.’

‘ Well, let’s go home and go to bed. We’ll go and see the old boozier to-morrow, and draw what we can.’

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE following afternoon found Nora Scanlan and Jane Smalley busily packing a square-covered basket with such supplies as their judicious minds thought suitable for the elderly and invalided recluse on the top of the down, to whom they intended to convey them.

‘Now,’ said Jane with a business-like expression, and a piece of paper in her hand, ‘let’s see what we’ve got. There’s a tin of meat jelly, a kettle, bottle of Cond’s Fluid—hope he won’t take it in mistake for medicine—a thing of insect-powder which puffs it out when you press the handle.’

‘That’s the thing the place needs most.’

‘I think it is. Half a pound of tea, a

towel and dishcloth, and a bit of yellow soap. Oh yes, a lump of tobacco. That's all we want, isn't it ?

‘ Well, we might give him a bottle of rum. I'll be glad to contribute that.’

‘ Oh, Nora !’

‘ Why not then, O Jane ? See now, I know a little more, maybe, about this class of people than you do, and it's my belief he'll like rum better than tea.’

‘ I'm afraid he will. Well, where shall we get it ?’

‘ From the public, I suppose, where he gets it—the place where Johnny and Dick went last night to hear him tell stories.’

‘ What, the Sloop ? That's where the fishermen and coastguards go, and the soldiers. Oh, Nora, I couldn't go there !’

‘ Then, I could. You can stay outside, me dear.’

‘ Oh well, if it comes to that, I'll go where you do. After all, they're all people about here that we know who go there, and there is no harm in them.’

‘ There won’t be anyone at all there now. It’s the wrong time of day. I tell you, I know more about this sort of thing than you do. Perhaps you mightn’t imagine me as a little girl going round the corner for a jug of stout or a bottle of Jameson ?’

‘ No, I never should. You are so—so stately, you know, I can’t imagine you being a little girl.’

‘ I was one, though, and naughty as a rule.’

‘ Well, let’s start now, before anyone comes to meddle and give good advice, and tell us to don’t.’

And these two philanthropists walked down the zigzag road to the shore in the afternoon sunshine, carrying the square basket alternately, though I think Nora took a good deal more than her share of the burden—‘ monopolized the carrying trade,’ as economists used to say.

Then the strange spectacle might have been seen of two respectably-attired young ladies going into an ancient and mouldering public-house, flavoured with otto of stale

tobacco and beer, and dim reminiscences of 'old salt,' and coming out again with a bottle labelled 'Finest Old Black Head Jamaica Rum,' with some paper loosely twisted round it. This was crammed somehow into the square-covered basket, and there indulged in a loud discussion with the kettle and the bottle of Condry all the way up the chalk road, to the entertainment of two artillerymen who were basking on the down near the fort gate, one on his face and one on his back.

On reaching the summit, within a few yards of the eremite's cell, Jane turned round, and, standing still, said with a tragic expression :

'Nora, we've forgotten the sugar !'

'Well, never mind. We can't go down for it again. I dare say he can do without it.'

'Do you think so ? I couldn't.'

'No, but you have been brought up differently. You don't care for chewing black lumps of tobacco, now, for example.'

Arriving at the stone hut or sty which sheltered the invalid, they knocked and entered, and found Isle of Wight Isaac sitting on his stool, at his table, wearing his tall hat and smoking his clay pipe. His arm was slung in the way the doctor had left it, and he was dressed in what may be described as a one-armed way. His free elbow was leaning on the table, taking from time to time the pipe from his lips, and he was puzzling over some dingy old blue paper documents which lay on the table. At the usual brief intervals he spat on the stone floor.

‘Marnin’, my prittees, marnin’! ’Taint many besides you what’d trapes up this yer ’ill to see a hold goo’-fer-nott’n like Hi. ’Ow be Hi? Hi be gittin’ on meddlin’ fair; but it do be ter’ble job to do all without nar but one arm an’ ’and.’

‘You ought to be in bed, oughtn’t you?’ said Jane.

‘I’dno; wha’ fur? My legs they be right enough. Lar bless your ’a-at, my beauties

both, Hi bin knocked about in my time a bloomin' sight wuss nor this yer.'

'Here's some things for you,' said Nora.

'Bless you, my dear, what be ye got?'

'Some tea.'

'Ah.'

'Some soap. And meat jelly for soup.'

'Ah.'

'A kettle, and some dishcloths and things.'

'Ah.'

'A quarter of a pound of plug and a bottle of rum.'

'Gorramighty bless your pretty face, and send you a fine tall sweet'art! There, I allus 'lowed to know ladies what *is* ladies. And you two brought all this yer up Romer Down yerselves?'

'Yes,' said Jane.

'Wha' fur?'

'Because we thought you wanted it.'

'Nobody else would a' thought of it. Well, I can't rightly tell 'ow to thank ye proper. But Hi shall thank ye fur it best ways I can.'

Now set ye down. There be armchair, what ole Pa'son give me, and yer be stool. Hi made 'ee. Hi be gwine to set on bed. Now 'oo be you, missie? Hi knows my pritty yer—she be Miss Smalley. But 'oo be you?

'I'm called Nora Scanlan, and a kind of cousin of Miss Smalley.'

'Ah. Cousin, is it? Mother's side?'

'No; not that. My grandfather was her grandfather's brother,' said Nora.

'Both Smalleys,' said Jane.

'Ah, they be fine ole fam'ly, they Smalleys, bain't they? Hi minds yerrin' of 'em when Hi was quite a young chap. Over to Parchmouth they was then, wuzen they?'

'Yes,' said Jane. 'I just remember grandpapa. He lived near Portsmouth. And, then, his father (our great-grandfather, Nora) was a sailor—Captain John Smalley, who died at the Battle of Trafalgar.'

'Ah, sailor 'ee was, eh?'

'Yes. Captain Smalley.'

'Cap'n Smalley. What ship?'

'Well, I don't exactly know. *Victory*, I

think. No ; that was Captain Hardy, wasn't it? Well, I forget. But they know all about it at home, and there is a picture of him in the dining-room.'

'And your granfer, missie,' said the old man, turning to Nora, 'was he a sailor, too?'

'Yes, for a long time. But not in the navy. He was in the merchant service.'

'And a good seaman, too, I be bound.' And the old man was silent, and seemed to be thinking, as he fingered his old blue paper documents.

'Have you any idea who pushed you into the quarry?' asked Jane, after a pause.

'Ah! that's queer, bain't it? Now, 'oo the 'ell done that? Askin' your pardons, my dears, but swearin' comes sa natural to me I can't keep off of it, not long.'

'Well, you'll have to do without it while we're here,' said Jane, 'or we shan't come and see you. It's very strange. I wonder who did it?'

'Who is there who could have wanted to kill you?' asked Nora. 'Was anyone turned

out of here—any other tenant, I mean—before you took the cabin?’

‘Mr. Nobody ’ee live yer afore me. No, there wasn’t no jealousy about this yer tenancy, missie, not like what you years of sometimes. The place was tumblin’ all ta peezees when I fust come, and nobody wanted it. There, p’raps it was the spirits tipped me over. But Hi bain’t meant to die on dry land, after all, though I nearly got done for this job. All sarts a rum things ’appens in this yer world, as you’ll know when you be sa hold as me, my beauties.’

‘Well, it’s odd, that’s all I can say. There is a mystery as yet unravelled,’ said Jane, returning to her literary manner. ‘Look here, Mr. Barton : when you want a cup of soup, you will take a teaspoonful out of this tin, and put it in your cup, and fill up with boiling water from the kettle, and stir it and put some salt in—see?’

‘Ay, ay, missie ; I can do that. I be ter’ble shook up with this yer tumble—more’n I ’lowed to be. Look ’ow my

fingers trembles. I be gettin' meddlin' hold, that's what it is, and I don't want no more tumbles over cliffs. Not that I'll ever die on shore. A black witch-woman in San Domingo, she tell me as I should die on the water. And it'll come true.'

'Then you'd better keep off the water.'

'Ole sailor-man can't allus keep off the water. You might as well ast me to keep off rum and baccy. What's the good of livin' without no pleasure? There, it's only last night I was astin' Mr. Blow for a berth aboard the *Curlew*, that cutter of his out there, what that Partygee gent 'ave 'ired, they tells me.'

'Mr. Scheiner?'

'Shiner, is it? Yes. That's 'im.'

'But he isn't Portuguese.'

'Then 'ee orter be, that's all, by the looks of 'im. Hi don't 'old with they far'ners, and I've seen a lot of 'em in my time, and spoke to 'em, too. Hi can speak Spanish, and French, and Nigger, and Partygee—least-ways, I did, could one time——' And the old

man began to wander a little from the point, and sing in rather a weak, cracked voice :

“ Me gustan todas, Me gustan todas,
Me gustan todas en general,
Pero la rubia, pero la rubia,
Pero la rubia me gusta mas !”

Ah, they girls of Buenos Ayres, and the songs they used to sing ! There, they be all skinny old women now, if they bain't dead.'

' I think you're getting tired,' said Jane ; ' you'd better lie down and go to sleep, and we'll say good-morning.'

' Maybe I will, my prittee. Good-marnin', and thank ye both kindly fur thinkin' of a wambling, crazy old vagabone like Hi be got. You come yer again soon, and I'll tell ye story.' And when the two girls left, he made himself some grog, drank it slowly, and then went to sleep on the bed, with his tall hat on.

Nora and Jane walked on along the road, which undulated over the range of down for some miles, within from fifty to a hundred yards of the edge of the cliff. It was warm,

but at that height there was generally a little breeze, and they could see the far-off horizon of the gray-blue sea, and the woods and the corn-fields of the landward side, softened by the summer haze. They had not gone far—in fact, they were standing at the point where the road began to dip a little and the ruins of Roylieu Abbey came in sight, in a valley a little way below and on the inland side. Through this valley, and through what was once the abbey domain, wandered a stream which ultimately fell over the cliff, through a kind of notch it had carved for itself, down to the sea, in that little cove where they had gone by water for a picnic some weeks before.

They were now on the cliff, just above the scene of that picnic, and were there overtaken by old Mr. Gilchrist, the Rector. After greetings, they told him what they had been doing, and he said :

‘Poor old fellow ! I was thinking of going there myself ; but from what you tell me, I think I had better postpone it to some other time.’

‘Well,’ said Jane, ‘he seems much older and weaker, and he was beginning to get very tired, and to wander a little in his talk, so we left.’

‘Ay, ay ; just breaking up. Old men must expect to get rusty and useless, and crazy and broken, and finally put away on a shelf, when their work, good and bad, is done, and wait for the time when they will get put together again and get their wages. I know that, young ladies. I feel it every day. The rocks are worn by the rain, and sun, and frost ; the strong old stone abbey down there crumbles and tumbles, and cows feed with its old floors buried ten inches below their feet, and yellow butterflies hover where the altar once stood ; the old sword gets rusty, and the old parson and his old serving man and his old horse are all wearing away together—wearing away, like what is it ?

“Like the snow-wreath in thaw,
To the Land of the Leal.”

But I’ll go and see the old fellow to-morrow.

I was just making my way to Roylieu to see how they are getting on with the excavations.'

'Oh yes,' said Jane; 'we've never been to see those.'

'Then you had better come now,' said Mr. Gilchrist, 'and I'll tell you all about it. I've got the plan in my pocket.'

'Have they found anything yet?' asked Jane, as they all proceeded down the sloping footpath from the road to the abbey.

'Not perhaps what you would call finding anything. No golden chalices or bags of gems.'

'Have they found any bones?' asked Nora.

'Well, it just happens that they have. They have found an oblong grave built in the thickness of the wall, containing two skeletons, or the remains of them, which are supposed to be those of the founder and his wife. They present a curious appearance, the skulls looking just like brown tortoise-shell. It is a strange thing to think that they were a hale and happy couple, perhaps

with many children round them, and horses and servants, and fields and cattle, who perhaps often strolled on summer afternoons on this very down where we now are, and looked out over yon blue sea to see the ships go by, seven centuries ago. And the down was here, and the valley, and the stream, and the growing grass, then as now. The men, and their wars and buildings, and joys and sorrows, pass like dreams, and the dear old earth with its everlasting hills remains. I am fond of the earth, with its beautiful valleys and plains, with yellow corn-fields and climbing blue-flowered bindweed and red poppies, the elms with the rooks cawing over my head in the afternoons, and the red and white cliffs in the morning when the sun is dispersing the mists, and the sailing boats stand motionless like pictures. But I am afraid mankind makes very ugly spots and stains on the earth here and there, digging great holes, and covering the land with black smoke, and crowded patches of sordid dwellings, like squalid ants' nests. Thank God,

however, there are none such here. But I fear I am verging into something very like a sermon,' concluded the old man cheerfully.

And after they had examined the excavations very fully, and had copious explanations, which I fear went in at one ear and out at the other in the case of the two girls—for the Rector was a bit of an archæologist, and took them relentlessly through every detail, pointing out beauties in columns in which only the bases were discernible, and that only by standing on the top of heaps of earth and looking down into holes, whereas he erected a complete but non-existent cloister in his mind's eye, and explained the purpose of tiled pavements, of which a dozen tiles lay heaped up anyhow against one another—and after the Rector had conversed in his amiable but discursive manner with nearly all the workmen, who were unearthing bits of wall and broken steps, he asked the two girls to go to the Rectory and take a cup of tea, after all their exertions, adding that they would find their respective brothers there,

who had walked over to see Cunningham. So they walked with him to the Rectory, and went into the garden, there to find the three young men in a state of *déshabille*, Johnny and Cunningham being alternately given tuition in the art of boxing by Dick Scanlan. As they approached, the latter's voice was heard saying :

‘Now, then, I want you to do this. Lead left at head and duck, left at body and stop.’

Then a thumping sound was heard.

‘Very good ! Now again.’

Similar thumping.

The girls and the Rector paused behind some shrubs for a minute or two and watched. Johnny, in a state of advanced perspiration, was performing in a flannel tennis-suit. Cunningham sat on a garden bench alongside some coats and hats, with his shirt sleeves rolled up, and his hair all rough, panting. Dick was in excellent condition, and no more perspired or panted than an iron statue. Then the two girls applauded

loudly, and the startled combatants looked round and grinned.

‘Gladiators surprised by swans,’ suggested Cunningham, parodying a well-known picture.

‘What an amusement to select for a hot day!’ exclaimed Jane.

Mrs. Gilchrist, a mild old lady who liked everybody, and partly through benevolence, partly through a quality only describable as exceeding greenness, never saw any harm in anybody, and allowed herself to be pillaged right and left by her excellent old servants and villagers, came out into the garden in a broad-brimmed hat with lace curtains round it (Jane’s description), and welcomed the two girls affectionately. She did not know Nora from Adam or Eve, but addressed her as ‘my dear,’ and patted her on the back, and said how glad she was to see her, and took them both into a cool and shady summer-house and prattled mildly to them, while earwigs, green caterpillars, and woodlice fell on her hat. Mrs. Gilchrist talked mainly about gardening, and was always

armed with a basket containing snippers, and gray thread gloves which hung out loosely at the finger-ends. A delightful old lady! I hope she is the wife of a bishop by this time, but doubt it, as episcopacy goes largely as kissing is said to go, and would not be likely to fall in the way of an erudite and excellent, if maundering, old rural dean like James Gilchrist, whatever Ministry gave a *congé d'élire* to the chapter of Bolderminster, of which cathedral the decorative but platitudinous Disney was already a canon.

The three young men pulled on their jackets and straw hats or cricket caps, and ran down to the shore to have a dip in the sea, returning very shortly fresh and cool, and ready for tea. How the grown-up Englishman likes to become a boy on all imaginable occasions, and to 'get into his flannels'! More power! as Dick Scanlan would say, and long may he continue so to do!

Dick and Nora were much taken with the Rector, who, they agreed, reminded them in

some ways of one Father Phil Cassidy, known in childhood's days. The Rector showed them his library, where he observed :

‘Andrew writes learned books full of isms, and I write prosy sermons for fishermen and coastguards.’

‘I don't believe they are prosy at all, Father,’ said Nora.

‘Mind what you're saying, then,’ said Dick.

Nora turned a fine rich scarlet, and said :

‘Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Gilchrist!’

The old Rector smiled, and replied :

‘There is no reason to apologize, I am sure. You are accustomed to do it in your own Church, and a very good, kindly old custom it is.’

‘I keep forgetting,’ said Nora. ‘I've never lived in England before. That is, not in the country, to know English life and people.’

‘Ah, and how do you like it, now you know it?’

‘It's very pleasant indeed. But I'd like to see foreign countries too.’

‘I dare say you will. And a great pleasure you will find it. I much regret never having left my native island. It informs the mind and widens the imaginative powers, besides giving much intelligent pleasure to the senses. I do my best to read the different French and Italian classics, but I am afraid I cannot pronounce the languages.’

When they went away, Cunningham walked with them as far as Fernbank, and Nora said to him :

‘I like your uncle very much. I think he’s a dear old man.’

‘Isn’t he? I thought you would.’

‘And I recognised the place directly, from the photograph of it you showed me in London. But I hope it didn’t sound very stupid, my addressing him as if he was a priest. It came out quite by accident.’

‘Very naturally. Uncle Jim’s the man to be rather flattered than otherwise.’

‘I say, Jane!’ said Johnny, ‘you’re going to catch it. And you, too, Paddy! You were both seen frequenting a public-house

this afternoon, and the boiling oil and melted lead are simmering at home.'

'No! Did anybody really see us, Johnny?' asked Nora.

Jane simply said, 'I don't care.'

'Yes, somebody did,' Cunningham said. 'Your anxiety suggests that there is some truth in the accusation, Miss Scanlan.'

'Well, there is. Jane and I went to take something to the old mountainy man——'

'The Hillside Party? Yes?'

'Now don't get making jokes about Ireland.'

'No. It shall not occur again. Well?'

'And we got a bottle of rum for him—at the Sloop.'

'Ah! Well, let me set your mind at rest. The only people who saw you were Johnny and your brother on their way to see me, so it's pretty safe.'

'Oh, that's all right. I was in an awful——'

'Don't hesitate on my account to say funk, if that's what you meant.'

They had walked on a little in advance of the others now, and Nora said :

‘Well, then, I did mean it.’

Cunningham pursued :

‘By the way, I observe that Johnny now addresses you as Paddy. It isn’t my business, but isn’t that slightly cheek?’

‘No, not if I don’t think so. And as you say, it is no business of yours.’

‘True.’

Nora went on, gently working herself up into a fine temper :

‘I don’t see why you should want to criticise. It looks as if you thought I didn’t know how to respect myself, or make people respect me.’

‘Such an idea never entered my head. I knew that he is often thoughtless, and that you are kind-hearted, and thought it possible he might, without intending any harm, be presuming slightly on your good-nature.’

‘I’m not a bit good-natured! And I thought you were his friend?’

‘So I am. Known him since he was in Eton jackets and turn-down collars.’

‘Then, I don’t think it’s nice of you to talk of him like that.’

‘Oh, well, if that is the kind of interpretation you put on what was simply intended in the way of a half-jocular hint, I am sorry I spoke.’

‘I should think you were.’

Cunningham smiled a little to himself, but said nothing more, and they reached Fernbank in gloomy silence.

Nevertheless, next time Johnny called her Paddy, Nora said :

‘Don’t do that any more, Johnny, please. You can go on calling me Nora, as before.’

‘Great Scott ! why not ?’

‘I don’t like it. That’s all.’

Great is consistency, and it shall prevail.

CHAPTER XIX.

TIME went smoothly on ; the tawny wheat was cut down, and bound into sheaves and gathered into shocks ; the yacht club had its races, concluding with aquatic sports for the benefit of the lower classes, and a fancy ball for the upper classes, at which the usual costumes were seen, hired from the usual shops, and the usual jokes were made about going ‘as a gentleman,’ ‘as a fool, then you won’t have to hire a dress,’ ‘disguised in liquor,’ etc.

Mr. Scheiner, by this time very popular, and generally sought after, was clad in the gala dress of a Magnate of Hungary, a Gospodar of Wallachia, or a Croatian Ban, or something equally picturesque and im-

posing, and enjoyed himself very thoroughly, dancing with all the best girls, more especially Hélène Smalley and Nora Scanlan.

Mrs. Scheiner was dressed in what purported to be some kind of peasant's costume, very *chic*, you may be certain, with a fair amount of ankle about it, and it brought her several new adherents, as well as delighting her more established vassals, who by this time were becoming numerous. For instance, Johnny took occasion to introduce Willie Satterthwaite to her, after that sage youth had been worked up to a proper degree of curiosity, interest, envy, and admiration, and Willie Satterthwaite got into languid *fin-de-siècle* attitudes, and patronized her, and talked a little about Ibsen.

‘This is a perfectly delightful boy,’ remarked Mrs. Scheiner afterwards to Johnny. ‘Thank you very much.’

‘Don’t mention it. I can spare him as long as you like. Put him in a cage, with perches and a swing, under your veranda.’

As Johnny's description of Willie has been given, perhaps it would be only fair to give Willie's description of Johnny.

‘He is a good fellow, Smalley—oh, quite a good fellow! Gives one the idea that he never was, and never will be, grown up. Seems to find so much freshness and delight in all the ordinary illusions—the things one usually feels to be played out. I believe he could get quite excited about a boat-race, or kicking a ball about. One thinks he ought to be a soldier and live in India, or a colonist, or something which involves living out of doors, wearing a flannel shirt, smoking pipes, drinking whisky in tin cans, and cultivating rococo sentimentality with a concertina. Still, there are possibilities about Smalley. He might be something if he took the trouble and read a little of the right things. He was in his last year when I went up to the 'Varsity, so one had not much chance, but one tried to interest him in the right things. The absurd etiquette of the place was an obstacle, because Smalley was so bound by formula that he

declined to accept advice from one who was a few terms junior to him. But I am far from denying that he has possible, or, rather, potential abilities.'

Kitty Scheiner looked interested, and said :

'And you—you have got no more use for illusions?'

'I fear so. Life is all the more a dreary and empty thing, save for the occasional amusement one derives from the observation of the others who still entertain hopes and beliefs and fears, and follow some mocking Will-o'-the-wisp. Indeed, I follow one Gleam myself, but quite hopelessly, I know. Its hopelessness is its excuse.'

'You are surely not in love?'

They were standing in a glazed-in balcony adorned by a grove of ferns, and below them was spread the darkened sea, sparkling with the lights of yachts at anchor. It was a hot night.

'Love? Oh no! I am never in love. I wish I were. No, the Gleam I follow—ah!

“ Arthur had vanished,
I knew not whither,
The king who loved me
And cannot die :

Arthur the king :
Touched at the golden
Cross of the churches,
Flashed on the tournament,
Flickered and bickered
From helmet to helmet,
And last on the forehead
Of Arthur the blameless
Rested the Gleam.”

Perhaps you have understood me already ?

‘ Not—as much as I hope to. Can’t you give me some more details ?’

‘ I dream—I know it is a dream, but I would not be wakened—of the restoration of the Royal House of England. I look for a day that never will dawn, and a sunrise I shall never see, when I may ride for the Stuart and see an England merry and devout, as in happy pre-huckstering ages. Were not I consoled by my Gleam, I should be a rank Anarchist. You laugh at me ?’

‘ I ? Never ! I catch on now. You are an English Legitimist.’

‘Ay. And a Legitimist for France and Spain too, and all countries afflicted with parvenu dynasties, and vulgar republics, and battenning *bourgeoisies*. You will not betray the high treason with which I have trusted you, Mrs. Scheiner?’

‘Betray? No, indeed—never! But what is there to betray?’

‘Well, I believe the House of Hanover have some absurd punishments—like the Mikado, only less refined—for this sort of thing. And I would rather do my work first before joining Kilmarnock and Balmerino.’

‘Mr. Satterthwaite, you are a strange man; you have interested me immensely! Will you take me to the supper-room?’

‘Ay, readily! Let us sup in the royal old fashion, and forget a world of sordid modern millions for awhile;’ and Willie bowed and offered his arm in his loftiest *ancien régime* style, and became very cavalierly and debonair.

Kitty Scheiner made a very good supper, and kept about half a dozen gentlemen in a

continuous chuckle of laughter, varying into a roar, who congregated about her. She contrived to get near the end of the table, in the best place, and to be supplied by the half-dozen gentlemen with all the best things, and she had something always ready to say to each and all of them. She was not the least shy, though superficially demure, and there was a fire of suppressed Satanity in her eyes, an undertone of subtle innuendo in her frivolous talk, and a suggestion of experience wider and deeper than theirs which completely fascinated her bevy of squires, captains, and 'boys.' There were Mr. Paynter and Colonel Poyns, and Admiral Moore, middle-aged worthies, who nudged each other knowingly, and would afterwards say, 'Reg'ler French, isn't she? *Espre*, y' know, and all that.' There was Willie Satterthwaite, whom she took care not to ignore or neglect, being gloomily sarcastic and dreadfully literary; there was Johnny Smalley, 'chaffing' at large, and immensely pleased with himself and with Kitty Scheiner, who gave him the

benefit of her naughtiest jokes and made deliberate fun of Willie and the fogies before their noses in that delightful Franco-American dialect of hers. And there were two honest soldiers with brownish-red faces, and short hair, and mess-jackets, who took to their champagne kindly, and chuckled when they understood, which was occasionally. Altogether, Mrs. Scheiner was completely mistress of the situation, and when she had taken a fairly sufficient quantity of champagne was very amusing indeed, though, perhaps, a trifle 'schoking.' Still, her style of 'schoking' was very refined and subtle, and she had been 'brought up abroad, don't you know, and American, and all that sort of thing.'

Besides, the old ladies and wives and young persons were safely anchored far away down the table, and did not see or hear much of it. Willie drank a toast solemnly and silently 'over the water,' to which Johnny replied by equally silently drinking another over a boar's head. Willie did not see it,

but Kitty did, and, I am very much afraid, winked privily when Johnny caught her eye. Mr. Paynter wore a white wig and eighteenth-century coat belonging to a different period from the wig, and with these and the muddy-brown, gray-streaked moustache with which nature had endowed him, was a very congruous figure. Admiral Moore and Colonel Poyns completely took the shine out of him with their scarlet and gold and blue and medals.

‘Thanks so much, Smalley, for presenting me! What a charming woman! And she has eyes the colour of brown sherry. Do you know, I think one may be able to make something of her. She understands things, which most of these bread-and-butter misses do not,’ observed Willie afterwards, while the black-and-gold skirts of Kitty Scheiner whirled gaily away into distance in company with a young man in a scarlet mess-jacket, to the tune of the ‘Tin-pot Polka’ (composed by Signor Jacopo Mossi, to words by Camberwell Binks, and very popular), played by

the band of the King Malachi's Own Loyal South-east Donegal Regiment, with the vigour and *élan* which always distinguished that band after refreshments had been administered to it.

'M, yes,' said Johnny; 'I think she does. Recruited her for the cause yet?'

'I hope so.'

'That's right! Be careful, you know; they are whetting that axe at Tower Hill, and giving the big black block a fresh coat of paint!' and Johnny roamed off chuckling to search for a partner.

Johnny wore his volunteer uniform, which suited him. Willie was guised as a Cavalier, with large frills below the knees and white roses on his shoes, and endeavoured to look the character, and (when he remembered) to give his conversation a Dryden-Etheredge-Wycherley tone, as far as modern manners allowed.

Andrew Cunningham had come to this ball he was not perfectly certain why, though it is probable that Nora Scanlan had some-

thing to do with it, as he felt quite satisfied and had no desire to go away when conversing with her, and when she left him to dance with Scheiner, said to somebody that he couldn't imagine what made him leave his comfortable chair, and pipe, and books, and bed, to dress like a fool and stay up all night in a room full of gas and idiocy; after which gloomy observation he proceeded to eat a hearty supper with Johnny and two gunners, when the ladies had gone back to the dancing-room. By the time he had done he calculated that Nora would be free again, when he would seek her, and the room full of gas and idiocy would probably become a hall of picturesque revelry and innocent mirth.

At supper, which was a comfortable free-and-easy picnic now the ladies were out of the way, at which everybody helped himself to everything he could get, and all talked at once, Cunningham, who was dressed in his barrister's robe and wig, flung off the wig, and one of the gunners hung it on an empty champagne bottle, saying:

‘No wonder you can’t eat and drink in that thing on a boiling night like this!’

Cunningham morosely said :

‘Man must wear something, I suppose ! I came in the beastly thing because I’d got it. Small pleasure to me.’

‘Like us,’ said the gunner—‘took your uniform because it’s nearest and cheapest, until you’ve paid for it. I say, Smalley, who’s the blazing ass with ham-frills round his fetlocks, brought in by the American lady to supper just now?’

‘His name’s Satterthwaite. Just down from Oxford. Governor lives here. I dare say he’ll look in here soon, and we’ll guy him a little further.’

‘He’d better not sit too near me,’ observed Cunningham, with his mouth full of game-pie, ‘for I feel just in the frame of mind to hammer his head in with a bottle.’

‘What’s the matter, old chap?’ said Johnny.

Now, the real matter was that Cunningham had just got fairly started on a very

pretty quarrel with Nora, which they would both have enjoyed thoroughly, and brought to an amiable conclusion in due course, but for the arrival of the said Willie Satterthwaite (whom some well-meaning person had already introduced to Nora), who joined in the conversation, patronizing them both, until the band struck up, and then took Nora away for a dance. However, he said :

‘ Oh, nothing, only I feel a trifle destructive. It’s absurd to pay any attention to a squirt like that, but he has been annoying me. Pass that bottle, please. ‘Thanks.’

‘ I’m sorry for him, then,’ said Johnny. ‘ I say, shall I introduce you to Mrs. Scheiner ?’

‘ Me ? Oh Lord no, thanks ! Not that she isn’t very charming. Oh yes ; I could see that, from a safe distance, when she was supping with you fellows and some elders whose hair has uncurled.’

‘ Devilish amusing,’ remarked one of the gunners ; ‘ and a very good sort, too, I should imagine. We are going to give an

afternoon over in the Romer one of these days : we must ask her. What is he like ?

‘ I know him. Dark man, dressed like King Solomon in all his glory. Very decent chap,’ replied the other gunner.

The music ceased.

‘ Hullo !’ said Johnny, ‘ here they all come again for drinks.’

Cunningham noticed that Nora was not among the inpouring crowd of hot, fan-working people, so put his wig on and left the supper-room to look for her. On the way he nearly fell over Willie Satterthwaite on some stairs, who was sitting, more or less literally, at the feet of Kitty Scheiner (to whom he had reverted as soon as the polka was over and the man in the red jacket dismissed), who was amusing herself mightily at the expense of the Cavalier, and being sentimentally Legitimist and pessimistically gay by turns. The Cavalier himself had acquired an unusual redness of complexion, and a glazed look about the eyes, which is the after-glow of champagne when it has been

well agitated by waltzing and the higher emotions. His long curly wig had 'shifted a couple of points to the narrad,' as mariners might say, and he really looked not unlike a contemporary of the 'bravoes of Alsatia, the pages of Whitehall.' Kitty, who had had at least twice as much wine as the Cavalier, was perfectly self-possessed, and, save for a certain laughing sinfulness in the 'brown-sherry' eyes, was absolutely as usual. Cunningham murmured an apology and fled.

'Who is that?' asked the lady, who really knew quite well.

'That long-legged Philistine is a barrister called Cunningham, an overbearing brute, and a Scotch Whig—the kind of soulless prig that calls itself Liberal Unionist. I was happily instrumental in protecting that lovely Irish girl—I forget her name—in the black muslin, with a diamond shamrock just here, from his insidious sophism.'

Among the other futilities entertained by Willie under the name of his convictions, he

considered himself a rank Parnellite as well as a Buddhist. But no matter.

‘ You think that young lady lovely ?’

‘ Well, she is, you must admit, in a way. Though I prefer a different style of beauty—when I prefer any at all. Mr. Scheiner seems to admire her. I saw them just now having an animated conversation, apparently on interesting and no doubt fitting subjects, in one of those balconies with the glass and ferns.’

‘ Did you ?’

‘ Yes. Why not ? What’s matter ?’

‘ Oh, why not ? Leo is just flirting all the time. It is like gambling to others. Some men cannot see cards without playing. Leo cannot see a—tolerable—girl without assuming the devotion of a life to her for the time being. I must—I must chaff him about it.’

Yes. She just then looked like chaffing him—the kind of chaff Mdle. Corday probably indulged in when she visited a certain statesman at his toilet. But Willie

Satterthwaite's brains were too addled with vanity and champagne to notice that.

Cunningham found his way by one of those mysterious instincts, tractions, or guidings, which no doubt esoteric Buddhists can explain, to the balcony over the sea where stood Nora Scanlan, in conversation with a handsome dark man in gorgeous apparel. Cunningham noticed before he entered that the man was Leopold Scheiner, and that he kissed her hand—not so much affectionately, however, as respectfully, in the way in which he would kiss the hand of the lady of the house when he came to pay a visit, and Cunningham, who was conversant with Continental life, manners, and language, from Kristiania to Cracow, could not legitimately resent the attention. ‘Besides,’ he reflected, ‘what is it to me? As far as I am concerned, she is at liberty to have her hands kissed by the general camp, and her face too, if it pleases her, as well as by that gibbering little Semitic baboon.’ And he proceeded, very angry (because it was a matter of entire

indifference to him), to go and remind Nora of a dance he stated to be owing to him. Scheiner at once bowed deeply, and eliminated himself with a tact and politeness which served to further exasperate Cunningham.

‘Oh yes, it is our dance, I know. But I have been dancing, Mr. Cunningham, till I’m fit to be tired. Do you mind sitting here instead?’

‘Not at all. Quite the contrary.’

And he took one of the chairs with which the balcony was provided.

‘You’re looking very cross,’ said Nora.

‘Oh no; I’m in bland spirits.’

‘I don’t like you to look like that. And I want to ask your advice about something.’

‘Yes?’

‘I don’t quite know what I ought to do. And I thought I could trust you.’

‘Yes. You can do that. What is it?’

‘I don’t like to tell you. I’m not supposed to tell anybody.’

‘Afraid I can’t give judgment till I have heard the evidence and the arguments.’

‘I suppose it’s that wig makes you talk like that. You remind me of the day we went to the Law Courts. Well, you know Mr. Scheiner?’

‘I have exchanged a few words with him.’

‘He is working for the Irredenta. You know what that is?’

‘Oh yes. Do you?’

‘I’ve gone into the matter, and had it all explained to me. And as we are Irish—Dick and myself, I mean—he thought we might sympathize and like to help. And he knows William O’Mara and some of the Irish leaders in Paris and in America, and says they are all assisting, that they and he are working to a common end.’

‘He being Scheiner?’

‘Of course. I’m after saying it. And I do sympathize with people who are governed by force by a foreign Power. I know you laugh at me, but I do. And Dick will do what I tell him. And I don’t want to be just a talker and no other good.’

‘What form does Mr. Scheiner propose that your sympathy should take?’

‘He said that a few hundred pounds just now meant salvation to the Cause.’

‘Yes; I suppose so.’

‘I know they can’t get on without money for the Irish Cause, and if the poor servant girls and bricklayers over in America can give so much of the little they have, how much more ought we to give of the lot we have!’

‘But the Trentino isn’t even in Ireland.’

‘No. But the idea is the same. And if we help them they will help us. And William O’Mara is helping in it, and he would take part in nothing wrong.’

‘And what do you propose to do?’

‘I want Dick and me to give five hundred pounds between us. Young Mr. Satterthwaite has promised something, too.’

‘This is what you want my opinion about?’

‘Yes; I would like to do it. Do you see any reason why I shouldn’t, thinking

and feeling as you know I do about these things ?’

‘ Well, if I had been in Mr. Scheiner’s place, I think I would have applied first to your brother, instead of trying to get round you on the sentimental side. Irredentism is the most insane bosh, which hasn’t the remotest chance of any success beyond frothy speechifying and mischievous newspaper writing, and if it did succeed would bring on a disastrous European war. William O’Mara, though I believe him to be an honest man, is an inflated fool, and his example in such a matter would be one to avoid. Furthermore, how do you know what would become of the money, and that this Scheiner man wouldn’t simply pocket it ?’

Nora, turning scarlet, replied :

‘ You’ve no right to say that behind his back ! I wouldn’t let anyone say anything about *you*. It isn’t like you to talk like that. I know what you mean. You don’t like him, and you think I do, and — oh, I wish I hadn’t asked you now !’

‘There’s no occasion to be angry.’

‘There is! And I *am* angry — very angry.’

‘Then, you ought to have more sense. It is chivalrous of you to defend him against my insidious backbitings, I know, and I appreciate it. But it is chivalry thrown away. I know just about six times as much about the world generally as you do, and I am saying confidentially to you what I think, at your own request, on a matter which interests you, and not me, and I tell you that you know nothing whatever about this man, and whether he deserves the trust you propose giving him. And it is just because you did not quite, in your inmost heart, trust him, that you consulted me, and now I confirm your own doubts you throw things at me.’

‘Well, don’t lecture any more. What do you want me to do?’

‘Postpone your donation till you know more about the whole thing. Look here, never mind what I said about the merits of Irredentism. Let us suppose it a meritorious

and wise enterprise. In the meantime, why not write to William O'Mara and ask him if he knows Scheiner, and what his connection with the Cause really is? That is a reasonable suggestion, isn't it?

Nora replied, not yet appeased:

'But you said William O'Mara was a fool.'

'I did utter that blasphemy. But look at it from your own point of view: *you* think him an enlightened and statesman-like patriot, presumably, so why not consult him on a matter on which he is said to be an authority?'

'But I don't know him.'

'Well, I do, or I know others who do. Shall I do it?'

'What you don't know isn't worth knowing, it seems.'

'I haven't assumed such omniscience as to deserve that sneer.'

'Oh no! Of course you're always right—you always are.'

'Do you know, some people might find you a little exasperating?'

Nora laughed, and said :

‘ They would, would they ? There, I’m sorry I lost my temper, and you’ve been very patient.’

‘ I think I have.’ Look here, if you will undertake not to contribute anything to this sacred Cause until I’ve made proper inquiries, I’ll undertake to hand over fifty pounds for the same object, if the inquiries are satisfactory. Is that fair ?’

‘ Yes, I suppose so.’

‘ Well, is it peace ?’

‘ Oh yes. Would you like the next dance ?’

‘ I would.’

When they entered the large room where the dancing took place, and the band on their platform were assembling together and getting their sheets of music out for the coming waltz, Mr. Scheiner and his wife were standing by one of the entrances talking eagerly, one might almost say disputing together. They did not seem in a very genial frame of mind, either of them, and were talking rapidly in French, and gesticu-

lating a little more than they did when they talked English. Scheiner was rapidly vibrating his left hand, with the two first fingers straight and the others bent, at about the height of his ear, and his face came forwards and downwards from his shoulders, like that of a vulture on a perch. His nose was more conspicuous in this position, and his eyes had got a viperish look which quite surprised Nora when she saw it.

Mrs. Scheiner was drawing her shoulders up very high, with her arms hanging straight beside her, and her hands turned upwards and outwards, knuckles uppermost. In one of them she crumpled a black glove tightly. The other had the companion glove on. That was how they looked at the moment when Cunningham and Nora passed them, and Cunningham heard Scheiner use an expression which no gentleman, foreign or otherwise, ever should use to a lady. Nora did not understand, but noticed that the woman looked at her for a single moment, with the kind of expression she had once seen

on some women fighting in the street in London, and that the man looked savagely dubious, first at Cunningham, then at the two ladies. Then in the twinkling of an eye he and his wife were both laughing, and friendly, and he was gay and arch and *espiègle*, and all that sort of thing, which it takes the pen of a Jane Smalley to describe in the proper language. Cunningham and his partner passed on, the former thinking to himself, 'That fellow's a bad egg, I'm sure. I wonder what his record really is.'

When they were gone, Mrs. Scheiner turned to her husband again, and said :

'I believe he understood.'

'That fool in the wig and gown?'

'Yes ; and he is not a fool, either.'

'He thinks himself very clever. If I find that he has crossed my little cheque for the Irredenta—made it non-negotiable ; he has been at some mischief, I can see, from his triumphant air of self-conceit—I will not forget him. Oh no, I will not forget him !'

‘Will you swear to me that that was all you were talking about with her?’

‘I will swear as much as you like, but my oath will not make it any truer.’

‘No, I am afraid it will not.’

‘Now we have quarrelled enough. Let it end. *Silentium ex.* I have got something out of the Satterthwaite boy—that is due to your talents, I have no doubt. It will all go to the Irredenta.’

‘Of course. How much?’

The poor woman was trying to pretend that the ‘Irredenta’ would perhaps really get that cheque, but it was hard work.

‘Thirty pounds. He has only his allowance, or he would make it more. I think that I deserve it, after the trouble I have taken with him. My sins! he is a bright star! *C’est le vide même!* But he has signed the cheque, which shows the wisdom of carrying a stylograph pen even in this costume. If we can only get on the right side of his papa! And your other boy, the Johnny?’

‘He’s perfectly sweet. Oh, I like Johnny!’

‘Ah! Well, go and dance with him or someone now.’

It was now getting well into the small hours, and those who visited those convenient balconies between the dances saw a gray sea and dim purple promontories, instead of a black sea with sparkling lights and no promontories at all. Then they saw a sea all golden and glittering, and red, brown and white cliffs, and a sky covered with herald fire-flakes; and they looked in each other’s faces and laughed at the havoc of the night, the men with beards beginning to show, roughened hair, and crumpled and limp collars, and ridiculous coloured costumes never meant for day to expose in their garish crudity; the women with their complexions all wrong, their eyes sinking with fatigue in dusky orbits, their trimmings and *balayeuses* pinned up or torn recklessly off, their gloves discoloured, and bouquets faded, forgotten, or picked to pieces and thrown in sad flakes out of the balconies into the sea. The chaperons, the mothers, the aunts—ah, but they did not go into balconies

in the dawn ! They yawned and drooped on chairs in the gaslight, and tried to persuade their charges to go, and said, 'Papa says so.' We will not investigate their appearance when they got out of carriages at their front-doors in the brilliant sunshine of an August morning, when the harvesters were already at work in the yellow fields, and the blue smoke was floating over cottage chimneys. But before they all straggled home, something happened which made this ball memorable at Redcliff for more than nine days—say ten. Mrs. Scheiner was walking slowly with her arm in Johnny Smalley's, intending to take part in a dance again shortly, and still showing great spirit and a better appearance than many of the girls ten years younger than herself, when they heard in the adjacent supper-room a thumping noise, accompanied by a crash as of crockery or glass, and followed by hurried movements, confused voices, and then the sounds of female hysterics.

'What can that be ?' said the lady.

'Someone knocked someone else down

with a ham, I should imagine. Some of 'em begin to get a trifle lively, as a rule, by this time.'

'Had you not better see?'

'Oh, what's the good? It'll be all over now. Nothing but jabber and contradictory explanation. Let's have another turn, miladi.'

Here Cunningham suddenly came to them, and said:

'Johnny, you're wanted in the supper-room. Look sharp! I'll join you in a minute. Your father's not well.'

Johnny went.

Cunningham said to Mrs. Scheiner:

'Pardon my interrupting you so suddenly. Mr. Smalley has just had a seizure of some kind—I should say an apoplectic fit.'

Kitty was really shocked:

'Oh, how perfectly dreadful! The poor family!'

'If you will allow me, I will take you to your husband. My name is Cunningham.'

I have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Scheiner.'

Mrs. Scheiner bowed gravely, and put her hand on Cunningham's arm.

'Hope she won't faint or anything,' was his thought, as he hurriedly looked round till he could 'spot' Scheiner, to whom he led her, and with whom he left her.

She told him what Cunningham had told her.

'My girl!' said Scheiner, 'Providence is playing on our side, and giving us the nap hand. Oh, never mind why. Go you to the carriage, and go home. Everyone will go now. I shall stay and bring the latest news, and make myself useful if possible. Excellent Papa Smalley! Oh, I will go to your funeral with the very blackest clothes that can be obtained—if you will only die!'

Mrs. Scheiner went away as she was bidden. The windows of the supper-room were unshuttered and thrown open, and the morning light blazed on a disordered supper-table, and a group of shuddering people, in

tawdry tom-fool dresses, huddled round a stout middle-aged man, lying partly undressed on the floor, over whom knelt Dr. Wheeler in his usual costume, who had been fetched by Cunningham while the others were arguing and trying extempore remedies with tumblers and ice-spoons.

‘Go ’way, all of you! B’ off! Except the relations,’ said Dr. Wheeler. Then he got upright and said quietly to Johnny, with his hand on his shoulder: ‘Your father’s dead.’

CHAPTER XX.

SEPTEMBER began, and continued, and drew towards a close, with at first mild and dull weather with sea-fog, then mild and wet weather with fine drifting rain, and then chilly weather with wind and hard rain and hail. After the continuous fine hot weeks of the summer, this was particularly chilling and depressing, and people like Mr. Paynter went about saying: 'I thought we should have to pay for it, sooner or later, when we had all those fine days.' And yet nobody rose up and smote him, which shows how lowering Redcliff can become to the energies and general tone in mild, moist weather. It became frightfully dull. All the visitors in the villas went away; the bathing-

machines were hauled up high and dry, the boating and canoe-paddling ceased, and the gatherings at the Sloop began earlier, and its guest-room assumed a cosier aspect as that of out-of-doors grew wintrier and wetter and the days shorter. The roads became filthy and the grass soppy, to the discouragement of such as had energy to attempt country walks; the yachts were 'laid up' or fled like white-winged birds of passage to the Mediterranean, and the Club became, if not a habitation for dragons, at least a court for owls, for Mr. Paynter and Admiral Moore sat there and discussed how much money poor old Smalley had, and how much property, and how distributed, and General Barker occasionally wandered in and explained the Sixth Seal, and the Seventh Vial, and how they all worked into the Nebular Hypothesis and the Eastern Question—oh, that Club was a great place on rainy afternoons *hors saison*. And in the evening there was whist, and wilderness generally.

The only excitement for several weeks had been the funeral of Mr. Smalley, which took place a few days after the Club Fancy Ball. The local paper had expressed itself very feelingly on the subject, and said that the shockingly sudden decease of a well-known resident, who was but little past the prime of life, could not fail to cast a gloom over the town and neighbourhood, and create a vacancy which would be severely felt. It also stated that several families would be placed in mourning, and appended a biography of the deceased, and concluded by saying that the interment would take place on Tuesday at the new cemetery.

The funeral was well attended. Many people were actually present, including a deputation from the battalion of the county volunteers, to which the deceased had at one time belonged, while everybody sent at least one horse, and in some cases two, to represent them, together with an empty carriage. The poorer classes assembled in large numbers, a few from actual respect to

the deceased, and because they had had his custom or patronage, and most from the morbid delight in all things connected with disease, corpses and burials which seems to prevail everywhere among the lower and lower middle classes.

Poor Johnny, who alone of his family was present, looked pale and dignified in a black suit and tall hat, and found it rather trying, because he was so conspicuous, the man who stage-managed having placed him by himself, behind the hearse, in his proper position, no doubt, whereas he wanted Dick Scanlan to walk beside him in that painful and grotesque procession through the street, where the fat-faced butchers and grocers and the pale and bearded druggist stared hard from the doors of their partly-shuttered shops, and turned to whisper to their assistants as the dead went by, and awe-stricken boys and girls pointed, and make remarks. Dick Scanlan was made to walk alongside of a total stranger, a brother of Mrs. Smalley, who lived at Bolderminster. Then there was the cemetery, with its

two brand-new perky chapels, its rigid gravel paths, and its hideous little tombs with shingle borders, votive flowers, and gilt inscriptions, all with an air of unnatural neatness, newness, order and precision. Then Mr. Disney, in a cassock and short surplice, a black velvet skull-cap on his head, and a wide thin book in his hand, carefully spoiling some of the most beautiful sentences in the English tongue by his peculiarly unhappy way of bleating them out, with great satisfaction to himself. The interior of an arid little chapel, soft-footed struggles by the undertaker's men, a coffin laid on the ready trestles, which were quite new, and painted black the week before last. More bleatings. Out of doors again, round a heap of yellow clay, some rough planks and carefully-cut squares of turf in a little pile, and an oblong yellow clay pit. Ropes. Struggles by the undertaker's men. The coffin lowered into the clay pit. Further bleatings. The dull rattle of bits of dry clay dropped on the coffin at the usual cue. A brass plate with a name

and date on it. Several gloomy people shaking hands unusually hard with him, and dispersing. A wild desire to laugh, and then to run away. Such was the nightmare series of impressions Johnny went through, until the touch of nature came and brought him back to human life and presence of mind. A grizzled old man came up to him when the others were retiring, and said :

‘ Me and thy feyther were not friends, John Smalley, and now he is doon there and I am here, I am sorry. Will thee shake hands ?’

It was Mr. Satterthwaite.

‘ Thank you,’ said Johnny, ‘ I will, and that gladly.’

And Mr. Satterthwaite shook hands silently, and walked away with heavy, decided steps and strong thick boots. Johnny walked away and overtook Dick and Cunningham, who were walking together slowly in the direction of Redcliff. The cemetery lay at some little distance outside the village, or town. And then the rain came on, and persisted all day.

Very shortly after this the Scanlans moved into The Oaks, both because it was more or less ready for them, and because they did not wish to obtrude their presence in a house of mourning. Towards the end of September Cunningham went back to London to his chambers, which he now would occupy alone to a large extent, as Johnny had given up the idea of practising law, under the unexpected circumstances, and would only use his share of the chambers occasionally, when he came to town to eat a dinner or two and go through the formality of being called to the Bar.

Cunningham rose rather early, breakfasted, and worked at his book all the morning, went out to some neighbouring restaurant in the middle of the day, or, if the weather was very bad, had lunch sent in, and, if the afternoon was at all propitious, went for a long ramble, sometimes about the streets of London, and sometimes out to Hampstead, Highgate, or Finchley. Then, on his return, he prepared his evening meal, or 'nursery tea,' as Johnny

used to call it, and spent the evening, in all likelihood, reading and playing the piano. This course of life felt very lonely after the year or two during which he had been accustomed to the bright face and cheerful talk of Johnny Smalley, who brought in a pleasant atmosphere from the gay and social side of life, and chattered about friends, about theatres, girls, and pleasant frivolities generally, which, although not of a temperament to participate in with enthusiasm, Cunningham liked to hear about.

Of course, he had a few friends who looked in occasionally, but they were none of them as intimate as Johnny, and did not speak the 'shibboleths of the inside track' of No. —, Brick Court, to use a phrase of Johnny's, nor had they, as Johnny had, 'people' whom Cunningham knew, more especially Irish cousins. Then, Cunningham did not care to go to the theatre by himself. He went not often under any circumstances, but on previous occasions he had always had Johnny with him to share the impressions, which

made all the difference, to say nothing of discussing them over supper afterwards.

‘Come on,’ Johnny would say, ‘let’s go to a good rousing old melodrama, and applaud the villain persistently and exclusively. Let’s sit in the pit, and make them think we’ve mistaken the villain for the hero, and clap violently when he delivers his most depraved sentiments and criminal intentions.’

But this kind of thing was over now, and Cunningham found melodrama, farcical comedy, burlesque, and high classic drama equally unsatisfactory. They all seemed worse and more artificial than they used to be. So he did not go to theatres. And he felt lonely, and lived in his chambers by himself, and wrote about Applied and Un-applied Ethics till Common-sense, Intuition, the Individual, the Community, Pure Egoistic Hedonism, and Altruism did ghost-dances in his dreams. Then he gave himself a holiday, and spent it walking about London and reading newspapers and novels. This is a condition of things in which a man usually

manages to get himself into mischief, and his Applied Ethics into a tangle.

Well, Cunningham did not quite do this, but he went to see Mrs. Denison. He had, as he promised, found Alexander a school—a sort of little kindergarten kept by an old married college friend—which kept that enterprising urchin out of the gutter and its associations for some part of the day, and imparted to him the rudiments, not only of the Liberal Arts, but of decent behaviour ; and Mrs. Denison was very thankful indeed, and wrote a letter to Cunningham, addressed to his chambers, freely underlined, full of gratitude, veiled sentimentality, allusions to the perversity of fate and things one learns too late, with lapses here and there in the spelling. The postscript ran :

‘ Since Alexander has gone to school I am *more lonely than ever.*’

‘ Lonely, are you ?’ commented he, as he read it before the solitary coffee-cup and plate of bacon, broiled by a wiry tin bachelor’s

machine. 'I expect you are. And you haven't even got an immortal and apparently unending work on Conduct to console you.'

And that afternoon he went to see her, and she made no disguise of her delight at seeing him, and made him sit in the only comfortable chair in the shabby second-floor sitting-room, and gave him a cup of vile tea. And in the evening he took her out to dinner again at the old place.

'I sup in the old frank,' he thought to himself; 'no good saying that to her. She wouldn't understand, or like it if she did.'

It happened for once to be a fine day, so they walked in Regent Street for half an hour or so before dinner, and he bought her another pair of gloves. On the way from Golden Square they happened to meet Dr. Hanlon, of Brewer Street, who recognised them and grinned, and asked after the little boy. When he was gone, she said to Cunningham, 'I believe——' then stopped and blushed.

'You believe what?'

'Oh, nothing. I shan't tell you.'

‘ Very well.’

That of course determined her to tell, and she did, in this way :

‘ I believe he thought something.’

‘ I’m glad of that. Few people think at all.’

‘ Oh, but I mean about us.’

‘ Very likely. Thought we looked idle and comfortable, while he is busy and burdened with an unlucrative practice.’

‘ Oh, but I mean about us—and Alexander.’

‘ Well, that doesn’t matter, does it ?’

‘ Wouldn’t you mind ?’

‘ It’s a matter of entire indifference to me what his thoughts may be, and I suppose to you.’

‘ Oh yes ! Still, I believe he did.’

‘ All right. Let him.’

And after that day it happened rather often that Cunningham took her out to dinner. And she gradually began to acquire a more complete wardrobe—a new hat, a walking costume, a pair of boots, and, as winter was

approaching, a seal jacket. And books came for her to read—railway editions of novels, and the like of that. And Bella always opened the door to Cunningham with a cheerful smile, and adopted a benevolent manner toward him. And when he had allowed a longer time than usual to elapse since his last visit, Mrs. Denison would look reproachful, and say, ‘Well, you *are* a stranger!’ and so on, and so on. Cunningham was not in love with the poor woman, but he was compassionate on her wrecked prospects and her helpless, dreary life, and found her companionship amusing, and just went on in the way above shadowed forth without intending any harm whatever. He had never even kissed her, though I am afraid she had given him occasional opportunities. And as for her, she simply worshipped him, and carried out his slightest hint or behest like a slave or a dog with a master, and the time between his last appearance and his next was a blank, during which she invested the heroes in the novels she read with Cunningham’s per-

sonality, and dreamed of him at night. She was ready to sacrifice her whole life and future, her reputation, and everything else, to him for the asking—only it never occurred to him to ask her. And, meaning to be kind, he did not realize how cruel such kindness might be.

And if all this is not getting into mischief, it is very like.

He never asked her to his chambers, or wilfully put her in any position which he thought might be compromising, and he was not given to sentimentality in conversation, but possessed a self-contained, dry manner, tempered with a quiet jocularly. Still, if all this is not getting into mischief, it is very like it. Cunningham was not in his first youth; he had had a *Sturm und Drang* period long ago, and though he had not forgotten its lessons, he had outlived its sweetness and bitterness; he was by no means a fool, and if he was really attached to any woman at all, it was certainly not to the poor little matron of Golden Square, who cried at

melodramas, spelt 'written' with one 't,' and kissed Cunningham's portrait before she went to bed. I omitted to mention that she had bothered him till he gave her a photograph. He, not having had one taken, save an amateur group in Norway with Johnny and other people in it, for years, victimized himself to the extent of visiting a 'swell' studio in Regent Street, and submitting to a new and expensive process, which made him come out like a pinkish bandit with a melodramatic scowl and a skin of lardaceous smoothness. However, Mrs. Denison liked it, and the people at the place where he had it done said it was capital, and they ought to know. Cunningham just did this out of lazy good-nature, as he sometimes bought her articles of personal use and adornment, very much as he might have given a child a box of chocolate-creams. But chocolate-creams are not very good for children.

It is possible that this aimless foolishness, begun with benevolent intentions and carried on with none at all—certainly not with male-

volent ones—would have led, plus loneliness, laziness and good-nature, in the course of time to Something. And it is probable that Something would have had in it the elements of danger, trouble and remorse, or at the least ennui, deterioration and regret. But it was woven and snipped by the implacable Three that Something should be averted by the occurrence of Something Else. And that in manner as follows: Cunningham was at the table in his sitting-room one morning at his work, pipe in mouth, pen in hand, the table covered with books in various languages bearing on the subject, and full of little paper-markers with memoranda written on them. The laundress had cleared away the breakfast things from another smaller table; a bright fire was burning in the grate; it rained outside in a persistent small drizzling way, and the old chambers, with the well-filled bookcases, warm reddish carpet and table-cover, comfortable old chairs, rowing pots and framed photographs and water-colours, looked particularly cosy, and their

learned occupant had made up his mind that that day would be spent in them, if the weather continued as it had begun, of which there seemed every prospect. Then came a brisk knock at the outer door. Cunningham went to answer it, and was confronted by a tall, dripping man in a mackintosh, recognisable as Dick Scanlan.

‘ Oh, it’s you, is it ? Come in ; delighted to see you ! Here, let me put your things in the pantry ; there’s a bucket there they can drip into. And come you and warm yourself, and tell a man about things generally. This way. Now sit down. There are cigars on this bracket, and tobacco in this jar on the other one, and pipes on the mantelpiece. Will you take anything ?’

‘ Sure and I will. It’s a very chilly day. Well, I’ve come to see you. How are you ?’

‘ Oh, I’m all right. Been doing a lot of work, and living rather the life of a hermit, tempered with roamings about London.’

‘ You look as if you had done too much

work, and been too much alone. All work and no play, eh ?

‘Perhaps it has been rather that way. And what’s your news ? Leave your sister all right ?’

‘Thanks, she’s very well indeed ; and I didn’t leave her far, for we’re both in town.’

‘Oh, how’s that ? I thought you were settled at The Oaks.’

‘Well, listen while I tell you. Slainthe ! That’s good whisky. Where do you get it from, then ?’

‘Dundee. Here’s to ye.’

‘’Tis this way. As soon as he was buried—him that you know of, God rest him—we went to The Oaks. You know that. All right. Well, we had the divil’s own delights getting some decent servants, but that’s nothing. And we were every day finding something we hadn’t got—that’s a good bull, too—and having trouble with ironmongers and plumbers and the like of that, and it got wearing. Then it rained like blind hookey

every mortal day, and we didn't know what to do ; and I wanted to buy a horse or two, and didn't know where to get them. There were the poor Smalleys ; well, they were not seeing anybody, and we didn't like to go and see them much in their affliction, being sort of strangers though blood relatives. Johnny came to see us at times, but he's taken up with the foreign lady, most of his time, I've a notion. And Nora got restless and fidgety, and short in the temper, and went on as if she wanted something she hadn't got, didn't know what it was, but would give no peace till she got it, like my native land. Scheiner came to see us occasionally. He's a civil little chap. Took us out in a yacht one day.'

'Did he, though ?'

'He did. The only morning it didn't rain. His wife made herself mightily agreeable to me, and he talked to Nora. She was civil to him, I will say for her, but they didn't seem to cotton much, while the lady and I got along like fireworks. That was at first,

because after awhile she was sick, and went to lie down, and Nora dabbed her on the forehead with scent and settled her cushions. Then Nora came upstairs and smiled sadly upon us, and was shortly sick too, and went to lie down. And then I'll be roasted if the little foreigner wasn't sick too, and I held his head and gave him neat whisky. Oh, it was a lovely cruise ! And then I ate all the lunch by myself and had a pipe and grog with the captain while it came on to rain pailfuls. I never saw Nora hungrier than she was at dinner that evening.'

Cunningham chuckled grimly and observed :

' Jolly voyage that !'

Scanlan puffed his cigar into renewed vitality, sucked at his whisky, and said :

' It was—quite the pleasure trip. Well, the upshot of it all is that we found it deadly dull, and between us came to the conclusion that we would go to town for a spell. Then Nora said why wouldn't we go abroad too, to some country where they have decent

weather? We had a lot of money, why not enjoy it while we were young and healthy? So I said it was good enough, but where would we be going? I've been to Egypt in a trooper and back, and never want to see the place again, but I don't know anything about Continental travelling at all. So she said you knew all about foreign countries, and would tell us what to do if we consulted you. Then I said, "How about the house?" She said that was all right; all I had to do was to leave somebody to keep the things clean and see that thieves didn't come in. So I found a good old non-com. out of the 'leventh Hussars, Sergeant-major Malone, with a wife and a good character, and I put them in to look after that lot, and we started off for London yesterday, and I haven't seen Nora as cheerful for weeks as she was the morning she got in the train. We went to the theatre last night, had a jolly good supper, and are as jolly as sandboys, or whiteboys, or the North Foreland buoys, if they're jolly. And I came to talk to you, and to

ask you to give us the route, and our general orders.'

'Well, I think it's a capital idea. I shall be delighted, of course, to give you any information I can. I've got Baedekers and maps here for most places.'

'But there's another thing I was going to ask you, comrade, with permission. Are you working desperate hard now?'

'I've been doing a good lot.'

'Is it practising as a counsellor, or working at your book?'

'Book. Rare is the brief I ever get.'

'Then will you pack up your papers, or leave 'em behind, and come with us? And we'll thank you more for that than for all the maps and instructions in the world.'

Cunningham got up and walked about the room.

'It's very kind of you, Scanlan, very kind indeed.'

'Oh, it's you would be doing the kindness!'

'Wouldn't I be intrusive—in the way?'

‘Divil sweep the roof off the house you wouldn’t be welcome in where we were.’

‘Would—would it be agreeable to your sister, do you think?’

‘She put it into my head.’

Cunningham came to a standstill in front of the window, turned round, and said :

‘Very well ; I’ll go.’

‘Hurroo ! Then, you’ll do all the planning, and take us somewhere pleasant, and tell us where we are and all about it?’

‘I’ll try. When do you want to go?’

‘I left Nora packing her kit. Can’t we start somewhere this evening ? The sooner we get out of this God-forsaken climate the better.’

‘I can be ready in half an hour if necessary. But we needn’t cut it so fine as that. Can you both come here with your luggage by half-past six?’

‘Easy.’

‘Then if you will do so, I will be ready, and will have made out a tour, or the beginning of one, by then. We can drive to

Holborn Viaduct, dine there, and take the train at half-past eight and go *viâ* Flushing. Have you got any money ?

‘ I have.’

‘ I’ll go round to the bank and get some when I go out, and be all ready for you by half-past six.’

‘ Six-thirty. Here. With our kits. We will do it. Oh, Nora will be glad when I tell her !’

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN the good-natured Irishman had gone away with his mackintosh and umbrella up Middle Temple Lane, to stride along the Strand to the Empire Hotel and inform Nora of the good tidings, which he did with boyish glee, Cunningham looked at his papers and books on the table, and laughed.

‘ I’d better sort them all decently and put them away in the cupboard. As that good fellow would say, “ Divil sweep the work I’ll be doin’ for the rest of this morning.” There is an odd sort of pulsating excitement in my head which takes away all interest in the Minimal Limits of Individual Freedom in a Community. It can’t be the whisky. Funny feeling ! I suppose I am overworked, and a

trifle played out, what with rain and fog and—how many tons of soot do they calculate to the atmosphere of London? I shall use my own individual freedom now, and begin by packing a portmanteau, into which I shall carefully forget to put my work. If any notions strike me abroad, I can chalk them on the walls, and one can always buy a sixpenny note-book and pencil in any country.'

Then he packed and strapped a faithful brown leather portmanteau, which had been with him everywhere, and bore the traces of many travels, in fragmentary railway and steamboat labels. And he put articles for immediate use, such as hair-brushes, tobacco, and a well-thumbed 'Globe' Shakespeare, into a brown leather bag, which had been intended by the maker to contain briefs, and remained in that respect a hollow mockery. Having lugged the portmanteau into the little drab-panelled entrance passage of the chambers, and put the bag and a waterproof overcoat on the top of it, he stood before

the fire and pondered. Then he put all the traces of his work in the cupboard, and wrote a short note to Mrs. Denison to say he was going abroad for a little time, but would be back in due course. A note civil, and not unkind, but a little vague. In fact, it did not occur to him that his absence would make any special difference to her. He did not think she would miss him more than he expected to miss her. After that, he noticed that it was about one o'clock, so he took an umbrella and an old hat and went out into the Strand, posted his note, and with it two or three cheap editions of novels from a bookseller's shop he happened to pass, sent a telegram, cashed a cheque at his bank in one of the streets off Covent Garden, and went into the Vienna Bier-Halle and had a little lunch, in the highest of spirits, and with the dreary hermit feeling quite gone, passed off like the effects of a drug. He was still wondering why it was that his bosom's lord sat so lightly on its throne, when he finished his simple repast and went out into the street

again to find the rain had ceased and that the sun was shining in a pallid manner on one side, while heavy gray clouds were rolling away on the other. The light caught the upper parts of the tall Strand houses aslant, and the church of St. Mary (which misguided persons want to pull down), and he thought what a splendid old street it was, fuller, perhaps, of every kind of interest than most other streets in London, and possessing a kind of varied picturesqueness given to few of them. This time yesterday he had been thinking what a beastly place it was. Then he walked home, pausing in Holywell Street to look at the old books, and the few remaining houses of mediæval London.

In his chambers he made out a little scheme of the journey he proposed arranging for the two orphans, noting hours of departure, convenient places to halt at, names of hotels, etc., put it all down on a slip of paper, and stuck it in his pocket-book. Then he went to the piano and played a lively march—I think it was the Soldiers' Chorus from 'Faust.'

Then he sat down and read a book. After an hour or two of this he began to get fidgety, and to look at the clock. It was only half-past four. He settled to the book again. More restlessness. Ten minutes past five. He looked out of window. The afternoon had got quite clear, with a cloudless sky of pale blue rarely seen in the neighbourhood of Fleet Street. He went up as far as the (far from beautiful) Gate of the Temple, and bought an afternoon paper. This he took home and read. A quarter to six. Then he thought whether there was anything he had forgotten to pack. A corkscrew, Baedekers, razor, tooth-powder, collars? No. He remembered putting them all in. Then he played something more on the piano, the Reel of Houlachan this time, and stood at the window looking out, and glancing back at the clock on the mantelpiece. The man was lighting the lamps below. At twenty minutes past six he began to get impatient. 'They might as well turn up now. Girls are not expected to be punctual, but Scanlan's a

soldier and knows that appointments are to be kept.' At five-and-twenty minutes past he was convicted of the injustice of this plaint by the arrival of a four-wheeler with luggage, which halted below. Dick Scanlan got out, and helped out Nora, who wore a dark-gray tweed dress of admirable cut. Cunningham now knew by the sudden increase of what he had called a 'pulsating excitement' what had caused it, and he stood at the door of his chambers on the stair-landing to receive them.

'Come in. I'm delighted to see you!' said he, shaking hands with her. What a time it seemed since he had last touched those long slender fingers in the black *suède* gloves!

'We're in good time, I hope?' said Dick.

'Oh yes, capital! Trust you soldiers for that. Miss Scanlan, you can't think how surprised and delighted I was to get the invitation your brother was kind enough to give me this morning.'

'I'm glad you're pleased,' said Nora.

‘ Well, Scanlan, can your cab take me and a portmanteau, or shall I get the porter to send a hansom ?’

‘ Oh, we can take you. Where’s the portmanteau ? I’ll bear a hand.’

‘ Thanks. Here it is, in the passage. Let’s see, I want a stick and a hat—that’ll do.’

‘ I’ll take your bag and coat,’ said Nora.

‘ Oh, don’t you trouble, Miss Scanlan ; I’ll come back for them.’

Nora made no reply, but carried them, while her brother and Cunningham carried the portmanteau down the dusty, creaking old wooden stairs, and pitched it on to the top of the four-wheeler. Then they all crawled in, and were rattled and jingled off to Holborn Viaduct, with the cries of ‘ Winner ! winner ! All the Winners !’ echoing in their ears as they passed along Fleet Street. It was beginning to get fairly dark, and rather chilly, and the big electric lamp of the *Daily News*, at the corner of Bouverie Street, and that of the *Daily Telegraph* on the other

side of Fleet Street, cast a white, dazzling radiance which made the dark darker and the chill chiller.

‘I always think that light looks like sunlight iced,’ said Nora.

‘It and the asphalte always strike me as the concrete form of the present age, the modern spirit,’ said Cunningham. ‘What prigs call *fin de siècle*.’

Dick recklessly observed that asphalte wasn’t a form of concrete at all, on which Cunningham absently remarked that there was no room to kick a person comfortably in a four-wheeler, and so they arrived in good spirits at Holborn Viaduct Station, where they dined.

At dinner, Dick said :

‘How long time have we to spare?’

‘You have got quite an hour. At the end of that we must get some tickets and register the luggage. In the meantime, there is no hurry. In fact, as people on these occasions always say, don’t eat your dinner as if there was a train waiting.’

‘You might tell us now,’ said Nora, ‘where we are going.’

‘To be sure. Well, I thought the best place to go to was Italy. It is about as unlike England as one can find, and that I take to be one of our objects.’

‘Italy? I never thought I should ever go there. It hardly seems real, like our fortune. It’s like a beautiful dream!’

‘Mind we don’t wake up, then,’ said Dick.

‘And how are we going to get there?’ pursued Nora.

‘Oh, by easy stages. By-and-by you will go down number something platform here, and get into a first-class compartment with foot-warmers in it, and that will be the beginning; and then you will rattle away into the darkness for an hour or two and stop on a wooden pier, where you will get out and find it a little cold; and we shall all have to put our overcoats and things on, snatch up our bags, and hurry along the platform and along a sloping wooden gangway on board a fine large steamer. By the

way, your brother tells me you're becoming quite a sailor.'

Dick winced visibly, and suppressed a sharp howl. He was sitting immediately opposite to Nora.

Cunningham pursued, with traces of a smile in his eyes :

'You will then, I think, retire to the ladies' cabin, where you will find sleeping accommodation, and be taken care of by a stout female who will probably call you "my dear"; and if you are wise you will go to bed and to sleep, and to-morrow morning you will breakfast in a nice flat, green, wet country called Holland. I shan't tell you any more now. To be continued.'

'Do you think there will be room for me on board the steamer?' asked Nora — 'I mean, if there are a lot of women I shan't get a bed, and I'm sure to be—to want one.'

'Might wire, mightn't we?' said Dick.

'It's all right; I did wire this afternoon, when I went to the post-office.'

'Ah! he's the thoughtful man. It's a

good beginning, Nora. Here, let's drink the journey's health! And yours, Cunningham!

And Dick filled up their three glasses with the inoffensive form of claret known as *Ordinaire* (special quality), and the toast was duly drunk.

'It's awfully kind of you people,' said Cunningham, 'to have compassion on my loneliness.'

'Oh, that's all right! We only want you because you will be useful,' replied Dick, as he set his glass down—'do we, Nora?'

'That's all,' replied Nora, and her eyes met Cunningham's for a moment, and were full of a kindness which was better than grateful speeches.

When dinner was over, with coffee, and a little more leisurely talk, Cunningham and Dick went out to perform the business part of the pilgrimage; and the former bought tickets, and did little sums in his head aloud to find what their respective shares were.

'I've only booked as far as Cologne,' he said explanatorily to Dick.

‘Oh, you just book to Mesopotamia, comrade. Whatever you think proper will be good enough, and here’s a couple of fivers. Give me the change when you’ve settled up everything and we are sitting in the train.’

So Cunningham had the luggage registered, closely followed by Dick, who took a boyish delight in the novelty of weighing, labelling with a number, and taking a receipt with a corresponding number.

‘Now,’ said Cunningham, ‘you’ll not see that again till it turns up in the German Custom-house.’

‘Oh Lord! And what do they draw the line at at the German Custom-house? Baccy, of course! They do that everywhere. The smuggling we all did coming home to Portsmouth in the old *Irrawaddy* was something pretty.’

‘Oh, we needn’t trouble. We’ve only a few ounces of tobacco, I suppose, and perhaps a bottle of whisky, between us.’

‘Have you got a bottle of that whisky of yours which I had this morning?’

‘ I have a pint.’

‘ Oh, you’re the lovely man, Cunningham !’

‘ Always heard so. Well, now everything’s settled, and I’ve got the tickets—here’s yours. One of these tracts is for you, and one for your sister. I’ve taken one bill for all the luggage, to save trouble, and I’ll keep that. And here’s your change. The price is marked on the tickets.’

Dick inspected the little books, turned over the little pages covered with mysterious inscriptions, such as ‘ Van Vlissingen naar Venloo of omgekeert, Nederlandsche Rhijn-Spoorweg,’ and other hieroglyphics, some made by stamping dot-shaped holes, with grave interest and intelligent curiosity.

‘ I see. Each page takes you a stage on the journey ?’

‘ Yes ; and you can stop at any of the places named if you want ; but it’s not worth while, under our circumstances.’

‘ Right !’ And Dick shut up the book and looked at the outside ; then, glancing at

his change, observed, after a pause, 'You've only taken for two.'

'Yes. Well, you are two, aren't you?'

'But didn't you know I meant you to take for three?'

'It did dimly occur to me that you had some such miserable little game on.'

'Won't you let us entertain you, Cunningham? You know you are obliging us no end by coming; and we've taken you from your work——'

'Look here, Scanlan, that's all bosh, and you know it is. I'd much sooner be idling about Europe with you than working by myself in London, and I'm going to do it, and glad of the chance. And I'm going to take my own ticket.'

'Well, well, as you please. Come and have a last drink in England, then, any way.'

'Yes; I'll do that, if you like, with pleasure.'

So they went into the buffet and had each a glass of whisky, and bought some wax

matches to fill their pocket-boxes. Then they returned to Nora, and Dick showed her her ticket and explained it to her in all the pride of newly-gotten knowledge, inventing freely when knowledge broke down. I think he introduced fragments of Africa here and there on the Dutch-Rhenish Railway, and filled in the words he could not pronounce with a little Irish. Then Cunningham shepherded them out to the train, saying:

‘Now, just cast a last glance round you at all the beautiful features of a London terminus. Look at the porters, the four-wheelers and hansoms, the Parcel Post van, the bills of the Evening Specials (containing *all* the winners), and the Keen’s Mustard, the Stephen’s Inks, and the Ozokerit, because you won’t see them again for a long time—which is a jubilee.’

And then they all got into their compartment, and watched the demeanour of the people who came to say good-bye to their friends, the embracing, the weeping, chattering, and giving of last instructions, which is

an invariable feature of the platform labelled 'Main Line and Continental' at that time. The Scanlans were interested to notice that several of the passengers were speaking in unknown tongues.

Cunningham leaned back in his corner and reflected :

'Well, if any fortune-teller had told me yesterday I should be here to-day, under these circumstances, I should have said he was mad. I wonder how soon this girl will have another row with me ?'

Not now, it seemed, for she was in the best of humours, and more full of conversation than usual. And he never imagined that just then Mrs. Denison was weeping in wild anger and despair on her faded old green rep sofa, with his note pressed against her face and crumpled in her hands. Oh no, he did not think about her at all. He was thinking about this beautiful girl who sat opposite to him, who had all the soul-swaying fascination, the stately chastity, the maddening perversity, the darkly-smiling tenderness, and the impul-

sive ferocity, of the mysterious island which gave her birth, the inexplicable land which has surely laboured under some fell enchantment since the days when the merchants of Tyre and Sidon knew it, through the long years after of Fiachadh-Fionchudh, the Prince with the White Cows, murdered by the people of Connaught, of Art-Aonhir the Melancholy, to those of Brian Boroimhe, who saved his country from Danes at Clontarf, to be murdered the same evening while kneeling at prayer, on Good Friday, of all days in the year. Is it possible for the characters of Una and the Lion to be united in one personality, or is it rather Una and the Wolf-dog, which is but seldom, unhappily, 'lying down'?

It must be admitted that Cunningham was idealizing somewhat as the train sped on, and the faster it went, the more he seemed to feel how it might really be with a serious and incomprehensible sublimity, rather than a cowardly and vulgar criminality, that men have stood, not all of them so long ago, on

that last stage where death meets life for something which in their passionate, unreasoning reason they held as dear and as sacred as a man may hold the woman he loves and will die for. What is the good of talking like that? Oh, none at all! And acting like that is still worse. Applied and Unapplied Ethics do not explain it. In a utilitarian sense it is all surely worse than useless, worse than mere vulgar selfish crime; for a halo of fictitious heroism surrounds it all, a stagey limelight of sordid martyrdom which provokes imitation, and induces sentimental persons to excuse grave social offences. And yet, when Utility and Social Ethics are spurned, when law is an incomprehensible snare to be evaded and defied as a matter of course, when not a word, not a thought, not an act proceeds on reasoning or motives in any way intelligible or familiar, what is one to say? Surely the Sphinx was A B C to it. What folly and what crime can a man not do for a woman he loves? And when many men are united in the love that is even

greater, for that land that is to them as the vision-woman of the Walpurgis Nacht, just the fashion and face of the one woman they have loved in this life, including the red line on her throat, what may they not do with souls bred of bygone generations who have felt the same, with no trace of temperate foresight, with no taint of Golden-Image-worshipping respectability? And if, in the pursuit of the beautiful suffering woman, they wander and plunge unrecking into the fiery unspeakable things of the Walpurgis Nacht, what shall be done to them? 'Well, hang them, I suppose,' thought Cunningham, 'though it seems too much to encourage the others.' Take heed, man! You are getting caught in a witch's web.

* * * * *

He wondered what would be the first thing she would say when the train slackened for Queenborough pier. She rubbed the opaque moisture from the window.

'It's a fine night,' was the prosaic answer to his speculation.

Well, after all, it was a very justifiable observation, for it was a beautiful night, quite windless, with the stars bright and clear, and the lights dotted about here and there had glittering yellow reflections in inky water. It was cold, however, and our friends, with the other passengers, who were not numerous, hurried on board the *Prins Hendrik*, tripped up over mats and hatchway-lids, and quickly found themselves in a large warm and cheerful saloon, in which the electric lamps glittered on burnished glasses and plates and white tablecloths, and tables laden with materials for cold supper of the most attractive description to hungry travellers—sirloins decorated with glittering jelly and white curling tendrils of horseradish, tongues and hams reposing in stiff snowy frills, china bowls of green salad, glass jars of pickles, bottles of ale, stout, Dutch beer and mineral waters in companies at quarter column distance, on a side-table, and bottles of wine at intervals along the main tables, and smart youths in blue nautical

uniforms and brass buttons who took instructions.

When order had issued from chaos, when berths had been assigned and bags deposited in them, and passengers had made up their minds whether they were going to stay on deck or below, whether they were going to roam up and down the saloon or sit down, and, if so, where—all of which took some time—our three travellers were sitting together at the end of the table.

‘It’s wonderful how hungry you can get two hours after dinner,’ remarked Dick. ‘See now, my lad, will you give me a little of that nice red beef, and that ham, and a leaf or so of salad—and maybe a trifle of cheese and some bread, while you’re about it—and a little butter? Thanks. I only want a snack. I beg your pardon, Cunningham; I oughtn’t to send the boy off before he had your orders too.’

‘Oh, that’s all right. I believe I could manage a little supper, too, though not quite

as much as your "snack." I'll take some tongue, please.'

'Beef-'n-'am, tongue, salad, bread, cheese, butter. Yessir. What'll you 'ave to drink, sir?'

Nora had already declined supper. Dick said :

'Ale for me.'

'Ale for me, too,' said Cunningham. 'Won't you have anything, Miss Scanlan?'

'No, thank you, really. I'll go to bed directly. I don't think it will be rough, will it?'

'It is guaranteed to be calm to stagnation,' replied Cunningham. 'Hampstead Pond will be a Maelström to it. I asked the captain, and he said so, in single Dutch.'

'Then, I'll venture on a glass of ale. I'll have some of yours, Dick.'

'I like you! And the bottle holds a glass and three-quarters.'

'Suppose we make it up for her between us,' said Cunningham; 'that'll be fair.'

'All right.' Then Dick added, winking

gently at Cunningham : ‘ But you know there’s the South-east Monsoon and the Tropic of Capricorn lies about here somewhere between us and over the way, and it’s always terrible stormy when you cross them. It’s smooth enough now, but I shouldn’t have any beer if I were you.’

Nora looked for a moment in alarm at Cunningham, and when she saw the funereal gravity with which he stared straight before him at the bull’s-eye window, took courage, and retorted :

‘ Then, they’re not the only thing that lies about here. I want my beer.’ And they ‘ made it up ’ as suggested.

‘ Ah, I was too fanciful. If I’d stuck to the Monsoon she’d have taken it all in ; but when I decorated it up a bit she got suspicious.’

‘ That Tropic gave it away,’ said Cunningham. ‘ Seriously, I don’t think there will be any motion to-night. Ah ! we’ve started now. The only thing to be feared is a fog off the coast of Holland, which would delay

our landing indefinitely. I once came from Antwerp in a steamer which ought to have arrived at Harwich early on a Tuesday morning, instead of which it arrived on Thursday afternoon, and we ate up all the provisions, and got into the condition of Gorging Jack and Guzzling Jimmy, and cast eyes on a pair of dachshunds a young fellow was bringing over.'

'There's some fine babies on board,' observed Dick; 'I heard 'em singing out in the women's quarters.'

'We'll bear it in mind,' said Cunningham.

'It was very good of you,' said Nora, 'to get me that little cabin to myself. I would have hated to be among all those women and children.'

'Yes,' said Cunningham; 'there always are children, and they always yell all night.'

'There,' said Dick, wiping his mouth with a sigh, 'I've finished my snack. Hollo! what's this about?' and he exhibited the inscription on his paper napkin, 'Stoomvaartmaatschappij Zeeland.' 'Zeeland's got

an awkward Christian name to call out in a hurry, hasn't he? Cnocaunacurrecooish isn't in it with that chappij.'

'That's Steamboat-Company-Zeeland—the Zeeland Steamboat Company—Dutch, you know.'

'And we're going to be in a country tomorrow where they talk *that* language? Here, let's finish the beer.'

Some young men at the other end of the table, who were going back to their crammer somewhere along the Rhine, were much interested in the 'awfully crummy' Irish girl, and confided to each other how that they were mashed, and invented that Dick and Cunningham (of both of whom they had the lowest opinion) were Irish members going abroad for treasonable purposes. 'Going to America by one of the Dutch or Belgian boats to hand the hat round, the blackguards! By Jove, though! I'd subscribe for tons of dynamite if *she* asked me.'

Nora soon retired, and Dick and Cunningham went up on deck, whence they watched

the various lights which were passed by the good ship *Prins Hendrik* on its way out to sea. Then they ensconced themselves comfortably in the little smoking-room on deck, and pulled silently at pipes until they got sleepy, when they went below and sought their berths.

Early next morning Dick was up, did much splashing about with a basin and cold water, with braces hanging down, everything in smart barrack style—‘Oh, it’s barracks teaches you to be a hardy animal’—and went on deck rosy and fresh, and in great contrast to the foreign Semitic-looking mercantile travellers, with stagnant circulations and alpaca caps, shivering in shawls and wraps.

When Cunningham reached the deck, he found Dick sitting on the bulwarks near the bow, with a knitted Tam-o’-Shanter on his head, his short *dhudeen* in his mouth, and his arm curled round a stay—and a fine strong, handsome fellow he looked. It was a beautiful morning without fog, and the low

brown coast and small bulbous steeples and fantastic light towers of Holland were dimly apparent under a pale-blue sky, with a gray and yellow sunrise.

‘ Ah, there you are ! So that’s the country where they speak Dutch, is it ?’

‘ Yes. I’m glad it’s such a jolly morning.’

‘ Makes one feel happy ; and, I say, my boy, when can we get another snack, eh ?’

‘ They serve breakfast on board at six.’

‘ It’s near that now. See, now, hadn’t we better send the stewardess to wake up Nora ? She’s a wonderful girl for sleeping.’

‘ Well, I will just tell you what I think. You see, we shall not get ashore for another hour nearly, and then there will be at least half an hour before the train goes. Once in the train, we shall be able to take a good solid meal, because there’s a dining-car, which she will be able to share without any nervousness about sea-sickness and that sort of thing. But we won’t make her get up till the last thing, because girls never can eat anything early in the morning on board ship ; and

standing about with no food will make her feel faint and queer, you know, and spoil her night's rest for nothing. But when it's time for her to get up we'll send the stewardess to her with a cup of tea.'

'Cunningham, you're a guardian angel to the wandering orphan! We'll do it. Have you any sisters, man?'

'Not one. Why?'

'Because you understand the treatment and habits of girls as if you had fourteen. I say, it's fresh up here.'

'It's nearly freezing, I think; but it will get warm as the sun gets up.'

'Then let's go down and look after that snack, and give the sun time to get to work.'

And they both made a very fair early breakfast, while the *Prins Hendrik* ploughed its way through the silent waters in the growing morning light, and while Nora was dreaming of Araby and fair Cashmere. At least, she may have been, though all she could remember of the dream when awakened was that there was something about cater-

pillars in it. When the stewardess came with tea, Nora had not at first the remotest idea where she was, or why the woman said, 'Better be quick, miss ; we shall be in in half an hour.' Then it suddenly occurred to her that she was on board a steamer, and must get up, and make haste.

Making haste happened to be one of the things she abominated, so she got up at once, and found that a narrow 'state-room,' freely littered with fragments of wearing apparel and the contents of a dressing-bag, and provided with a very small fixed basin and mirror, was the very worst place to practise making haste in. However, she drank her tea gratefully, struggled through the rest of the process of getting ready somehow, packed up and fastened her bag, and found her way into the saloon, where the crammer's young men stared furtively with gloomy admiration, and her brother and Cunningham were placidly sitting on the cushions under the round windows regarding empty plates, which had recently contained ham and eggs.

‘Good-morning. Oh, thank you, I slept very well. It was beautifully calm, wasn’t it? It was nice of you to send me tea, Dick. I wanted it.’

‘Yes—oh yes ! I’m a thoughtful chap.’

Nora looked from one to the other, and replied :

‘I expect I’m thanking the wrong person,’ with a pleasant smile at Cunningham. ‘It would have been more like Dick to send a pint of four ale !’

‘Worse things than that, too,’ answered Dick serenely. ‘You’ll have breakfast on shore, Nora, I’m told, in the beautiful country where the Maatschappij grows and runs about wild. Maybe I’ll manage to pick a bit myself. Wonderful tonic, this sea-air !’

‘I ought to mention, Miss Scanlan, that your brother has already had two poached eggs and three slices of ham, and a lot of bread-and-butter. The tonic is working very fairly. I think we shall be alongside in a minute or two.’

‘Do you mean to tell me,’ said Nora,

‘that there’s a foreign country getting close to us at this minute?’

‘Yes; it is very rapidly approaching.’

‘Then, why am I not seeing it? I want to see it.’

And she knelt on the seat and looked out through the round window with infantine eagerness and curiosity.

‘We’d better all pick up our traps and go on deck,’ said Cunningham, taking Nora’s bag and his own. And they went.

Nora was much interested and excited as they drew alongside the rather sombre landing-place, covered with low-class Dutchmen in wide-hipped brown fustian trousers and wooden shoes; and then they all landed, and walked through a long covered passage alongside a dull brown brick wall, passed through the perfunctory Dutch Custom-house, and got into a large waiting-room, where postcards and coffee seemed to be the ‘leading line.’ Nora and Dick were delighted and bewildered. Cunningham went to get on the right side of the conductor of the train,

and secure a table in the restaurant car, and seats in a compartment elsewhere ; while the cheery *G—d verdomme!* proclaimed unmistakably around the luggage-van that he was in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The sun had fairly come out now, and it was getting warmer ; the sky was clear and blue, and there was every prospect of a fine warm autumn day. Whereat he rejoiced.

When he returned to the waiting-room, he found Dick had ventured to purchase a cigar, and was looking ruefully at a handful of dirty, yellowish-black ten and five cent pieces he had received in change for half a crown.

‘It’s murderous-looking money,’ he observed.

‘Yes,’ said Cunningham ; ‘they stamp it out of the lids of meat-tins, I think. Come and get into the train now, if you like.’

The orphans came obediently, and arrived on the long platform, and gazed with reverent curiosity on a Dutch train, Dutch porters, and Dutch conductors.

‘One of the features of Flushing Station,’

observed Cunningham, 'is that it is apparently nowhere, and you can see nothing from it.'

'What's Niet Rookten mean?' asked Dick.

'Mustn't smoke there. So we'll go somewhere else.'

After the desperate climb necessitated by the lowness of the platform, they were soon seated round a fairly good beefsteak and fried potatoes and a bottle of claret, while the train emitted a high, thin, paltry squeal, and ambled gently forth over the mud-flats. Then they sat and contemplated the scenery (which is not exhilarating just there), and the two men smoked. Dick stood up and picked much entertainment out of the Dutch language as exhibited in a little placard beginning 'Het is niet ondersagt en dit Compartiment te rooken,' etc., while Nora looked at the swampy saline waste outside and then at Cunningham, and said :

'And now we really are abroad ?'

'We really are. How do you like it ?'

'I'm awfully pleased ; but I should not

have liked to go unless you had come,' she added in a lower voice.

The eyes smiled in Cunningham's grave face, and he said :

' Thank you.'

Both the windows were open. Dick shut one, saying that a saline draught was coming in. They passed the watery desolation, and neat villages came in view with uniform rows of little white houses with red tiles and bright green doors ; also absolutely rigid level roads running along raised embankments into the vanishing-point of perspective, on which peasant women with curious caps walked usually in couples, all exactly alike, and carrying what looked like buckets of pig-wash between them. Then windmills, and criss-cross ditches, and green grass. A very spick-and-span country house, with gables and turrets and spikes and weather-vanes, pink walls and slate roof wonderfully clean, and looking as if it had been just unpacked from the box it had been sent from the shop in. It stood in a pond.

Roosendaal. Here some military characters were standing about, who were a source of great diversion to Dick, who put his head and shoulders out of the window and leaned his elbows on the sill to look at them. Some were in a dark uniform with very short-tailed coats and bright orange woolly balls as knots to their sword-bayonets, while others were in dull convict gray with yellow piping, Austrian caps (or something approaching them), jackets which ceased at the waist, and trousers which had the national bagginess at the hips. All were equally destitute of the rudiments of that smartness of bearing which it is usual to associate with the profession of arms.

‘I’d like to have the drilling of that lot for a week,’ observed Dick; ‘the Dutch army wouldn’t know ’em when they came back. Ah now, look at that lance-corporal putting his hands in his pockets!’

‘Here, take your great shoulders out of the window, Dick,’ said Nora; ‘I want to see, too.’

‘Fifetin minoot opentoot,’ is the phonetic representation of what the melancholy-looking young conductor said to Nora, as she put her head out.

‘What?’ said she.

Cunningham explained. Then they all got out, ‘to take a walk in Holland,’ as Dick said, and went up and down the platform, being both interested in examining the natives and objects of interest to the latter themselves.

Boxtel, where Dick accepted the proffered cup of bouillon, purveyed by a man who kept a little oasis of a table in the midst of a dusty desert of rails.

Venloo, with its crumbling obsolete ramparts and moat, useful, perhaps, in the days of Corporal Trim, and its red-roofed clumps of ancient houses. Here Nora was the victim of an alarming adventure, and Cunningham took a slight liberty. Dick got out of the train, and made his way towards the refreshment department, and there immediately got into a difficulty over the money, when he had

selected a split roll with (apparently) a slab of smoked cow in it. And he and the woman stood discoursing to one another with complete affability and disregard of the fact that neither understood the other, and Dick munched his sandwich, and said :

‘ I’ve given you a tin waistcoat button, my dear, for it, and I’d like some change, if it’s entirely convenient ?’

The woman grinned, and explained in Dutch that she did not propose giving any change.

Cunningham got out and went to assist, and soon succeeded in putting matters on an intelligible footing, while the pleasant Patlander continued to give the quite middle-aged woman at the counter insane assurances of his undying affection for her, and told her she had a lovely country, ‘ all over spires and ponds, specially the latter.’

While this blameless fooling was toward, Nora, sitting in the train, was horrified to hear the thin squeal of the engine, and to feel the train start. It very soon stopped

again, however, and backed into an entirely different part of the station ; but for a moment the qualm was awful. And, of course, she was nervously anxious for the return of the other two after that, though the train was evidently at a standstill, and had all its doors open. Then came the melancholy young Dutch conductor, with his shabby unbuttoned tunic and dusty little *képi*, accompanied by an austere and stalwart flat-capped German conductor with a red pouch-belt, by whom the command, so to speak, was here taken over ; and they asked her questions, of which the point was only too evident. Her ticket was wanted, and Dick had it, and she was very uncomfortable indeed. It was a very trivial difficulty, of course, but the girl had been rendered nervous in the way mentioned, and could not explain properly. To her immense joy, Cunningham's face and tall form became visible on the platform, and she beckoned to him eagerly. He came, followed at a little distance by Dick, and on hearing of the matter he explained to the

Dutch conductor (who, of course, knew it was all right, and was waiting civilly enough), and called out to Dick :

‘ Here ! you’ve got Nora’s ticket, haven’t you ?’

It was accidental, certainly. Cunningham looked at her, and she did not seem to have taken any notice. Then he determined to have the matter settled there and then. So, getting up into the train again, he said to her :

‘ I beg your pardon. It was really quite an unintentional slip.’

‘ Oh, that ! I hardly noticed it, I was so glad to see you—to see you both come back. That doesn’t matter at all.’

Then, after a somewhat embarrassing pause, he said :

‘ Would there be any objection if—if the lapse was occasionally repeated ?’

‘ Oh, if you like ! It doesn’t matter at all,’ she replied, in a cold, off-hand tone, as if he had suggested having the window partly shut.

This was perhaps a little disappointing, but it was better than absolute prohibition.

And that is the history of the Alarm and the Liberty which made the decayed fortress and frontier-town of Venloo historic in the memory of Andrew Cunningham, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple.

And the train squealed again and rolled leisurely along towards the frontier. By this time it was fairly hot in the sunshine and approaching mid-day, and the travellers pictured to themselves with satisfaction the fog and chill drizzle probably blighting London at that moment.

Kalden - Kirchen. 'Alles Austeigen! Steuer-Revision!' And Dick had an opportunity of admiring the very military bearing and smart green uniforms of the German Customs officers, as well as of indulging in a pretty hearty 'snack,' in which, this time, the others joined him, and the first sample of German beer was submitted to the approving orphans, while Dick changed another half-

crown into a totally new and hopelessly confusing heap of ten and twenty pfennig pieces, after deducting the cost of his refreshment. During the next half-hour of the journey Cunningham delivered (by request) a lecture on the Continental currencies.

‘ Ah, I thought you’d find it no joke taking care of us. You might as well be dragging about a couple of young foxhound pups by one string. What would we have done without him, Nora ?’

‘ I think we would have just got lost, like the babes in the wood.’

‘ Oh, it’s simple enough,’ said Cunningham.

And so forth. What brings about a greater intimacy and friendship than a long journey together, supposing the travellers to be persons amicably disposed to one another to start with, and of a reasonable temperament ? We hear of people quarrelling with their chosen companions, it is true, but that is because they choose the wrong companion. In the present case, the Scanlans and Cunningham learned

to like and respect each other more every day, so much so that—— But I anticipate.

After an hour or two more of hot and dusty travelling over the plains of Rhenish Prussia —‘ It’s an immense big place, this Continent of yours, Cunningham ; we’ve only got a little way, and been travelling since yesterday ’—they made a final exit, with great pleasure, in a big bustling station, where they removed the inevitable coal-dust by the aid of soap and water and brushes, ate a hearty lunch, and went forth to find a hotel in the venerable city of the majestic twin steeples, and the broad gray-green river Rhine, on which they saw the lights shine in the evening.

END OF VOL. II.





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